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This dissertation contends that the first religious Great Awakening of the eighteenth century provided colonial American and early Republic writers of color with an ideological catalyst that helped them define themselves and their communities' sense of pride, purpose, and continuance. My project examines a literate group of South Carolina slaves, free black itinerant preacher John Marrant, and Mohegan minister Samson Occom. By considering how these marginalized writers and revivalists shaped and inspired textual forms of representation, I expand the boundaries of early Black Atlantic literary studies and understandings of Mohegan resistance to colonial religious and cultural surveillance. Highlighting these writers' adaption of and engagement with the cultural norms and literary genres of the Great Awakening and New Light Stir further nuances our knowledge of how oppressed writers of color asserted themselves as vital, imaginative agents of social justice.

“TO SPEAK FOR MYSELF”: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WRITERS OF COLOR  
AND THE FIRST GREAT AWAKENING

by

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Approved by

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To my wife, Kristina Pisano  
Your continual love, faith, and support saw me through

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. THE EMERGENCE OF BLACK LITERARY AGENCY IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD .....	30
III. THE SEVERITY OF SILENCE: THE AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS OF JOHN MARRANT'S <i>JOURNAL</i> .....	70
IV. "MY BROKEN HINTS TO APPEAR IN THE WORD": SAMSON OCCOM'S <i>A SERMON, PREACHED AT THE EXECUTION OF MOSES PAUL, AN INDIAN</i> AND THE DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF NATIVE SOLIDARITY .....	122
V. CONCLUSION .....	174
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	181

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

From 1734 to 1745, a religious fervor moved across the American colonies. Since the 1840s, historians and religious scholars have referred to this spiritual movement as the First Great Awakening.<sup>1</sup> The revivals of the 1730s and 40s are most notable to scholars because they inspired the emergence of a transatlantic cultural matrix that joined together religiosity, print culture, and audience participation (Lambert, “*Pedlar*” 9).<sup>2</sup> Worshippers from Scotland, Wales, and Britain, to Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston found themselves part of an ongoing debate over expressions of Protestant Christianity.<sup>3</sup>

By 1737, colonial American Calvinist Christianity had fractured into two dominant groups: New Lights and Old Lights. There were, of course, moderates who chose to embrace what they perceived to be the most reasonable and practical of the two groups; however, historians are clear on the point that there was a split. New Lights argued that all are welcome, regardless of race, sex, or class, in worshipping Christ as long as they publicly profess a new birth in Christ. The profession of one’s new birth encouraged an emotive experience: worshipers cried out, collapsed to the ground, sang exuberantly in unison, and even fell into trances. For clergy and laypeople alike, worship in fields was as sacred as churches. But perhaps most controversial, New Lights discouraged rigid hierarchies in religious communities, instead opting for open participation among worshippers and clergy alike.<sup>4</sup> For many communities throughout



the Atlantic world, such disregard for religious authority challenged firmly entrenched social norms by proposing an equal spiritual opportunity for impoverished whites, blacks, and Native peoples. To this point, scholarship on the Awakening considers, in some degree, the transformative nature of the revivals on black and Native communities. However, with little exception, discussions of the Awakening address writers of color in passing reference.<sup>5</sup> My project seeks to remedy these exclusions.

This dissertation takes up the perspective of nonwhite writers who were inspired by the egalitarian impulses of the Great Awakening. My project reframes discussions of the Awakening by examining the movement as a catalyst for black and Native writers to assert their emergence as socially conscious subjects. I challenge the scholarship that glosses over black and Native writers' skillful understanding and application of rhetorical and genre conventions by elucidating how these writers skillfully adopt revivalist norms and literary conventions as testaments of political and philosophical resistance. Specifically, I examine South Carolina planter elite Jonathan Bryan's slaves as emergent authorial agents via the publication of Anne Dutton's *A Letter to the Believing Negroes, Lately Converted in America* (1742); black itinerant preacher John Marrant's missionary account, *The Journal of the Rev. John Marrant* (1791); and Mohegan minister Samson Occom's *A Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian* (1772). These authors and texts refracted the ideas of a white-dominated Awakening as a means of publicly affirming their individual and communal integrity.

Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield were exemplary figures of the Great Awakening generally and the New Light revivals specifically. Edwards and Whitefield

found much success in converting typically marginalized groups of peoples, such as the youth, women, blacks, and Native peoples. Edwards's *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737) incited the First Great Awakening's transatlantic print campaign and touched off the New Light revivals. Edwards argues that the religious stirrings in and around Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1733-34 were unique and that the actions taking place in his community were the work of God. Edwards attempted to prove his argument in several ways; but, perhaps his most precise rationale is his underscoring of both the community's distance from the shifting ideas of urban spaces and the diversifying of worshippers in attendance: young and old, rich and poor, black and native, all sought conversion. In one example, Edwards observes: there are also "several Negroes, that from what was seen in them then, and what is discernible in them since, appear to have been truly born again in the late remarkable season" (66). Writing of his fellow Northampton residents, Edwards observes that "they have been preserved the freest by far, of any of the country, from error and variety of sects and opinions. Our being so far within the land [...] we have not been so much corrupted with vice, as most other parts" (57). For Edwards, the religious conversions taking place in Northampton cannot be attributed to the passing trends of religious fervor often found in cities or ports; rather, they are divinely inspired.

Edwards's *Faithful Narrative* legitimized the mass spiritual awakenings throughout the British Atlantic world with its religious zeal and reliance on recognizable rhetorical moves. The account conveys several conversion narratives of younger people, a common practice for the religious writings of the day. Since Edwards's maternal

grandfather, Solomon Stoddard's own evangelicalism led to many "soul harvests" from 1679-1718, Northampton had seen its fair share of religious fervor. However, by the time Edwards stepped to the pulpit in 1729, he had "inherited a church socially fractured and in spiritual decline" (Gura, 48, 62). Much of this had to do with dissenting opinions between Stoddard's open-door policy for church membership and Cotton Mather's more regulated, scrutinizing methods in the Boston area. Clearly new generations of worshippers were dismayed or, at the very least, disaffected by such theological infighting. Edwards observes as much, writing that "there had been a sharp decline" in younger peoples' church attendance and a general concern by community elders over some youths' frequenting of taverns. In fact, as Edwards comments, shortly after he took his ministerial post in 1729, he became aware that the town's youth "seemed to be at that time very insensible of the things of religion, and engaged in other cares and pursuits." However, by the end of 1733, "there appeared a very unusual flexibleness, and yielding to advice, in our young people" (59). By the spring of 1734, Edwards notes the sudden death of two young people which "seemed much to contribute to the solemnizing of the spirits of many young persons: and there began evidently to appear more of a religious concern on people's minds" (60). By utilizing the seemingly (super) natural conversion of the community's youth—rather than, say, the power and eloquence of the clergy—Edwards further underscores the distinctive nature of the Northampton awakening. Moreover, the *Narrative* illustrated a template for other ministers on both sides of the Atlantic to gauge the success of their own communities' awakenings.

George Whitefield's first preaching tour in America was influenced by Edwards's *Faithful Narrative*, significantly expanding Edwards's message beyond the brick and mortar of meeting houses. In 1739, inspired by Edwards's accounts of a rekindled spirituality in Massachusetts, George Whitefield arrived in South Carolina from Britain in order to accelerate conversions in the colonies. Where Edwards encouraged a pastor-led communal awakening, Whitefield set out to convert anyone who would listen.<sup>6</sup> Whitefield did not solely rely on revivals to achieve his goals, however. He utilized print media as a means of capturing audience's attention far and wide. This print campaign framed the sporadic revivals in the colonies and Britain as a widespread, transatlantic spiritual phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

By 1740, Whitefield's reputation as a fiery, controversial itinerate preacher was well-established in Britain and in the colonies, a reputation propagated by the proliferation of his printed works. Reports of his propensity for theatrical preaching and his equal enthusiasm for out- as well as in-door worship captured the attention of readers and listeners from various economic and racial backgrounds. With the help of press agent and friend William Seward and printers such as Benjamin Franklin and Bostonian Daniel Henchman, Whitefield flooded the colonies with works such as his *Journals* (1739), *Sermon on Religious Societies* (1739), and his autobiography, *A Faithful Narrative of the Life and Character of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield* (1739).<sup>8</sup> Frank Lambert observes that Henchman alone "published two different runs of fifteen hundred volumes each—a large number for an age when the 'more successful writing sold 1500' in the print capital of London." Lambert concludes that "[b]y widely circulating his account of God's calling

him to preach the necessity of the new birth Whitefield sought to strengthen the bond between message and messenger” (“*Pedlar*” 14). The creation of such a “bond between message and messenger” proved affective, as it facilitated an appeal across economic and racial lines.

Whitefield’s disruption of social norms proved too much for Old Light believers because marginalized people such as nonwhites began publicly professing their faith. Following Edwards’s *Faithful Narrative*, fellow Calvinist clergymen and laypeople distanced themselves from the emotive accounts of worship like the one’s described by Edwards. Many saw the emphasis on performative conversion as disingenuous and threatening, especially clergy who worried theatrics were substituted for a more refined understanding of Christian grace. Whitefield certainly did not help matters: he began printing attacks on clergy whom he deemed unconverted in the new birth. For example, in *The Sketches of Life and Labours of The Rev. George Whitefield*, a collection of sermons published in 1739, Whitefield condemns Old Light clergy, stating: “you are the schismatics, you are the bane of the church of England...feeding [the people] only with the dry husks of dead morality, and not bringing out to them the fatted calf; I mean, the doctrines of the operations of the blessed Spirit of God.” Whitefield concludes, adding: “Woe be unto such blind leaders of the blind! How can you escape the damnation of hell?” (286). Reactions to Whitefield’s divisive rhetoric were relatively swift and not bound to any particular geographic region. Traditionalist clergy and laypeople from New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, South Carolina, Scotland, and England condemned Whitefield’s attack on the spiritual integrity of church leaders.<sup>9</sup> Without

accepting a new birth in Christ, Whitefield argued, one was not qualified to convert others. Therefore, Old Lights, as they were known, publicly rejected Edwards and especially Whitefield on the grounds of unorthodox worship and their antagonism of fellow clergy.<sup>10</sup>

Some Old Lights were also annoyed with the saturation of Whitefield-related news. In the first half of the 1740s, he had become one of my most publicized figures in colonial print media.<sup>11</sup> Pastor Charles Chauncy, one of the most outspoken Old Lights, saw Whitefield's seemingly ubiquitous presence to be "ostentatious and assuming" (*"Pedlar"* 108). And Chauncy was not alone. In the July 24, 1740, issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, an anonymous writer angrily writes: "What Spirit such Enthusiastic Ravings proceed from, I shall not attempt to determine; but this I am very sure of, that they proceed not from the Spirit of God; for our God is a God of Order, and not of such Confusion." Meanwhile, others were contesting the celebrity culture in Boston associated with Whitefield. According to Lambert, a "group of antirevivalist laymen attributed Whitefield's tremendous reception in Boston to advance publicity" (108). In 1743, these laymen published *The Testimony and Advice of a Number of Laymen Respecting Religion, and the Teachers of It* as a direct response to the influx of Whitefield-related printings. They contended that even "before his Arrival" he "made such a Noise and Bustle" (108). The ruckus made by Whitefield angered layman and clergy alike because the content of his writings challenged the socio-religious parameters of more conservative ministers as well as their legitimacy as established religious leaders.

Whitefield was a convenient target for many antirevivalists due to his very public criticisms of Old Light clergy. But, in actuality, Old Lights were also alarmed at the general pattern of counter-cultural behavior exhibited by evangelicals universally. For many, the problem rested on the upsetting of racial boundaries. In 1742, former moderate turned Old Light Ebenezer Turell published two pamphlets which attacked, among other things, evangelists' acceptance of blacks. Turell lashed out against clergy who supported "Negroes" who were "most ignorant of the Principals of Religion to become Exhorters, even in considerable Assemblies" (*Inventing* 247). Indeed, other reports from the period suggest that the upset of racial, class, and gender roles was a danger to the fabric of society.<sup>12</sup>

The sheer availability and accessible, socially-inclusive message of Whitefield writings made him popular with impoverished whites, blacks, and to a lesser extent, Native peoples. Whitefield, like other New Lights, promoted a belief in the new birth: a theology supported not by church membership or social standing, but by an individualized acceptance of Christ as savior and an unwavering faith in God's preordaining of the soul. Whitefield's *Journals* and *Faithful Narrative*, for example, focus on a personalized spirituality. This framing is certainly rhetorical, as it carefully charts out the conversion to and practice of evangelical faith, thus providing readers and auditors with a persuasive model of behavior (*Inventing* 50). These printed accounts fostered a more personalized relationship between reader/auditor and writer. For example, in his *Journals*, Whitefield observes that while riding through the poor, rural community of Edenton, North Carolina, he was met by an elderly man who reported that

“his son-in-law who lived three miles away” had relayed to him details regarding his ministry. The man is careful to note that this information was gleaned from the newspapers, therefore demonstrating the wide circulation of Whitefield-related writings as well as the oral transmittance of print news (“*Pedlar*” 101). In another example, a pastor in a rural church in New Hampshire reports reading portions of Whitefield’s *Journals* and *Sermons on Religious Societies* printed in the *Boston Gazette* to his parishioners (“*Pedlar*” 101-02). Elsewhere in Boston, Whitefield’s message had apparently influenced one slave to challenge the morality of bondage.

The appeal of the Great Awakening for many blacks was due in large part to evangelists’ belief in spiritual egalitarianism: prospects of personal freedom, no matter how metaphysical, proved attractive to those in forced bondage. The communal nature of revivalist worship was conducive to slaves’ concentrated living arrangements on plantations in the southern colonies. Many slaves saw Christian worship as a means of relief from their day to day suffering, and for a time, were encouraged to embrace an active Christian faith.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, slaves occupied a domestic space with whites who, in addition to possibly occupying religious social networks, may have had easier access to newspapers and other print media.

The accessibility of new birth theology and Whitefield’s charismatic preaching perhaps empowered one domestic slave to assert his spiritual authority. In the October 17, 1741, publication of the revivalist periodical *The Weekly History*, an anonymous writer recalls a conversation held with a clergyman regarding the experience of a Boston slave owner. The writer explains that one day the Boston slave owner overheard in his



house what sounded like Whitefield's voice. Upon further inquiry, it was discovered to be the voice of his slave. The slave owner was not an admirer of Whitefield, so the following day he decided to invite some guests over to have his slave perform a mimicry of Whitefield. Instead, the writer observes, when the time came to impersonate Whitefield, the slave adopted Whitefield's voice, mannerisms, and new birth rhetoric in order to challenge his enslavement and condemn the men's propensity for drunkenness, swearing, lying, and fornication. The writer relates the slave's address as follows:

I am now come to my Exhortation; and to you my Master after the Flesh; But know that I have a Master even Jesus Christ my Saviour, who has said that a Man cannot serve two Masters. Therefore, I claim Jesus Christ to be my right Master; and all that come to him he will receive. You know, Master, you have been given to Cursing and Swearing [...] given to be Drunken, a Whoremonger, Covetous, a Liar, a Cheat &c. But know that God has pronounced a Woe against all such, and has said that such shall never enter the Kingdom of God. (Ruttenburg, 114)

The writer concludes that "the Negroe spoke with such Authority that struck the Gentleman to Heart," that they "are now pious sober Men [...] Such is the work of God by the Hands of poor Negroes" (114). We may never know if this account is truth or revivalist propaganda; however, the slave's message indeed reflects for many blacks, the appeal of revivalism's belief in spiritual egalitarianism and its close proximity to social equality.<sup>14</sup>

Native peoples' experience with Whitefield and the Great Awakening was different than slaves and free blacks. Whitefield's contact with Native peoples during the late 1730s and early 1740s was primarily through EuroAmerican-tribal trade networks. While Native peoples may have read or listened to readings of Whitefield-related

writings, some lived apart from evangelical societies. Whitefield notes in his *Journals* that his only real contact with the Allegheny in Pennsylvania came from a converted white man who had established a trade relationship. Such connections proved unproductive for conversion; therefore, Whitefield decidedly concentrated his energies in missionary schools, such as Eleazar Wheelock's Moor's Indian Charity School in New Hampshire.<sup>15</sup> For many Native peoples, especially in New England, contact with the ideas of the Great Awakening came through missionary education like Wheelock's school, or through the aggressive ministerial strategies of Anglo itinerant preachers such as David Brainerd, Joseph Fish, John Sergeant, and James Davenport.<sup>16</sup>

For nearly a century before the revivals of the 1730s and 40s, Native peoples in New England had some form of engagement with European missionaries. These encounters may have been direct, or, at the very least, indirectly related through intertribal communication.<sup>17</sup> Linford Fisher asserts that the "participation of many southern New England Natives in the Awakening during the 1740s was a continuation of, not a break with, prior religious engagement and strategies of creative cultural and religious adaption and survival" (67). For many Pequots, Montauketts, Niantics, Narragansetts, and Mohegans, previous exposure to English customs and religion made engagement with evangelicals less novel (67). English missionaries John Eliot and Daniel Gookin, for example, explored various tactics for converting Native peoples up until 1676.<sup>18</sup> Later, in 1701 the Anglican-run Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) began their campaign to convert Native peoples and African slaves. They remained active among Native tribes well into the twentieth century.

During much of the eighteenth century, though, for British missionary schools, successful Native conversion and formal education depended on tightly regulated writing and limited or no tribal contact during the student's tenure. According to Hilary Wyss, "[b]y emphasizing the teaching of reading rather than writing, [SPG] missionaries could speak for Natives" because they desired "a docile, passive Indian figure...that did not require self-expression" (*Indian Literacies* 6). Missionary schools required Native pupils to follow a strict etiquette in their writing. These policies neatly transitioned into Awakening-inspired missionary schools, such as Wheelock's Moor's Indian Charity School. Native writers were expected to adhere to a "clear hierarchy of teacher and student" as it kept students "eternally enmeshed in an unequal relationship" (*Indian Literacies* 14). The reinforcement of Anglo-American dominance through mandatory rhetorical training was part of a more circuitous method of colonialism. Wheelock, for example, forbid native dress, tribal languages, and tribal religious practices. He also prohibited students from participating in traditional social and economic activities such as hunting, fishing, and childrearing (Ouden 56). Amy Den Ouden argues that "Wheelock does indeed recognize indigenous familial relations as sites of knowledge production" and suggests this knowledge "demands vigilant surveillance and drastic measures of eradication." Ouden concludes that the regulatory measures implemented by Wheelock "points to the formation of a Euro-American Indian policy driven by both the cultural exigencies of the colonial civilizing mission and emergent notions of race" (56-57). Thus, missionary projects such as Wheelock's Moor's Indian Charity School are implicated in a

long line of subjugating Native peoples to EuroAmerican cultural norms and the devaluing of Native cultural practices.

This is not to say, though, that Native converts and pupils passively accepted such strictures. Epistolary exchanges between Wheelock and his students suggest that his pupils were indeed exercising some forms of cultural resistance. Narragansett pupil Sarah Simon's letter to Wheelock, for example, displays both the expected rhetoric and, more importantly, an implied disregard for its intended control over her subjectivity.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Mohegan Samson Occom's letters to Wheelock are well known challenging Wheelock's authority.<sup>20</sup> Clearly eighteenth-century missionary protocol for Natives met resistance along the way. In spite of Awakening-inspired missionary education programs, Native peoples retained and adopted, like many slaves, the counter-cultural ideas of spiritual egalitarianism inherent in New Light theology.

My dissertation veers from other early American literary and historical studies in that I read the Great Awakening as a catalyst for emergent authorial agency and communal empowerment through the lens of black and Native writers. In other words, I argue that black and Native writers used the Great Awakening to facilitate certain kinds of agency for racialized subjects. Several excellent studies on early black and Native writers address the influence of the Awakening, but couch it more as one of many influences in the formation of a writer's larger goals. In *Piety and Dissent*, for example, Eileen Razzari Elrod focuses on "the rhetorical relationship between writers of color...and their white readers, the way they constructed authority, the way they positioned themselves within the traditions and communities emerging from revival

religion, the way they challenged readers' presumptions and autobiographical conventions" (5). This project, too, takes up the rhetorical relationship between writer, reader, and auditor, as well as genre conventions; however, my study emphasizes the Awakening specifically as a catalyst for authorial agency in lesser-studied texts, and looks beyond well-studied the autobiographical genre for evidence of these assertions. Missionary journals and execution sermons were powerful mediums for reinforcing EuroAmerican socio-religious norms—more so than, say, autobiographical writing. By adapting the missionary journal and the execution sermon, writers of color could more precisely combat the EuroAmerican hegemony reinforced in colonial print culture.

During the height of the Great Awakening, readers were captivated by accounts of massive crowds, worshippers' display of spiritual ecstasy, and the dramatic performances of ministers. These demands were met by newspaper editorials, revival narratives, missionary journals, sermons, and spiritual autobiographies. Together, these religious texts created an evangelical print culture with established norms that could be emulated, therefore reinforcing notions that the revivals were not only intercolonial or even transatlantic in scope, but also culturally generative.<sup>21</sup> Revivalist participants and isolated readers shared in an evangelical print culture that normalized "new birth" theology, patterns of behavior, and, most crucial to my argument, generated a narrative of white EuroAmerican normativity.

While modern scholars recognize the Great Awakening's disturbance of religious and social hierarchies, there is little discussion of its role in codifying a belief in EuroAmerican cultural dominance. Michael Warner, for example, notes that "[n]o matter

how much religious contention the colonists experienced during the Awakening, religion continued to pull against the normalization of social division, eventually requiring a separation of church and state” (58). Warner’s observation is mostly correct. Indeed, some religious historians see evidence of the anti-authoritarian behaviors of New Light evangelists as a precursor to later public challenges to British colonial rule and interpretations of political and ecclesiastical power following American independence.<sup>22</sup> However, Warner contends, without further discussion on the topic, that eighteenth-century print culture was entirely based on EuroAmerican interests. Warner suggests that “print and writing could only be alien to the entirely or even partially literate, including almost all Native Americans and the enslaved blacks” (11). In addition, Lambert defines the religious print network of the Great Awakening as an “Anglo-American” enterprise with an interest in capitalizing on the transatlantic scope of the revivals (*Inventing* 158). Warner’s analysis reads literacy as an indicator of cultural and ethnic inclusivity; Lambert recognizes that print networks were created by and for a white EuroAmerican audience as a means of spreading and reinforcing religious and cultural norms. The scope of both scholars is far too narrow, however. Neither scholar investigates the racialized dimensions of eighteenth-century print culture, or, more specifically, the print culture of the Great Awakening. My project expands this discussion by considering a new way of understanding the Great Awakening, as an inherently raced cultural and theological movement that did more than facilitate EuroAmerican discussions of self, community, and faith in the print sphere. The Awakening fostered a print culture that reinforced EuroAmerican norms.

Black and Native writers attended to ideas of the Awakening because they provided them with access to socially accepted notions of spiritual equality. This is not to say, however, that an engagement with New Light practices was a direct pathway to political and economic freedom. White evangelicals preached the possibility of celestial freedom for all; there was no emphasis on earthly social equality. But, as Thomas Kidd asserts, many nonwhite evangelicals “would accept that contradiction only for so long” (228). Nonwhite evangelicals recognized the gospel of salvation to be a source of personal and communal empowerment; that is, the widely-accepted understanding in New Light circles that all people could find salvation in Christ created, for nonwhite writers, a close proximity to the possibility of personal and communal justice. Rather than quietly foster ideas of human equality in their respective congregations, Marrant and Occom sought to publicly affirm their individual and communal integrity by employing the most powerful tool at their disposal: religious writing.

Much of this project focuses intently on the adaption of popular religious genres. Marrant and Occom understood the importance of selecting genres with established literary traditions. Eighteenth-century readers and writers understood popular genres of writing such as missionary journals and sermons to have strong ties to socio-religious commentary since the late seventeenth century.<sup>23</sup> Marrant’s *A Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black* (1785), for example, was popular throughout the transatlantic world because it merged several marketable qualities. The “sensationalist title” coded the narrative as a uniquely black experience; in addition, the *Narrative* employed popular literary conventions such as the captivity narrative and

spiritual autobiography.<sup>24</sup> Joanna Brooks and John Saillant observe that “Marrant’s account of his wayward youth, dramatic conversion, Indian captivity, and Loyalist military service won broad popularity among audiences in England, the United States, and Canada, and new editions appeared regularly into the nineteenth century” (*Face Zion Forward* 19).<sup>25</sup> This experiential knowledge must have alerted Marrant to a potential market of readers already familiar with his *Narrative* and therefore eager to read a missionary journal composed by a black evangelical. Perhaps this explains part of his motivation for publishing his *Journal* while in London.<sup>26</sup> The selection of the missionary journal genre, however, had greater significance than financial motivations.

Marrant had good reason to adapt the missionary journal to argue his professional authority and the communal integrity of mixed worshippers in Nova Scotia. By 1790, the missionary journal was a well-known religious and socially-minded genre of writing popularized by Great Awakening itinerant preachers.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, prior to Marrant, missionary journals were exclusively written by white clergy for EuroAmerican audiences. They were, in essence, colonizing tools: the minister-narrator evaluated nonwhites (mostly Native peoples) according to their adoption of Euro-centric Christian values, all the while underscoring the narrator’s sacrifices for the greater good of white civility. In short, missionary journals reinforced notions of, to borrow Amy E. Den Ouden’s words, “surveillance of Native identities, and the production of specific notions of Indian ‘illegitimacy’” which cleared the way for colonial political maneuvering (7). The Awakening produced some of the most influential missionary journals, setting a



precedent for missionary writings such as Marrant in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

One of the most transformative versions of missionary writing was evangelical itinerant preacher David Brainerd's *An Account of the Life of the late Reverend Mr. David Brainerd* (1749). In 1747, Brainerd died and left his manuscript to Jonathan Edwards. In 1749, Edwards edited and published Brainerd's *Account*. Brainerd's itinerant career led him throughout New England and the Mid Atlantic colonies. He spent time with the Machicans at Kaunaumeeck, New York, and eventually ministered to the Delaware tribes at Crossweeksung and Cranberry, New Jersey.<sup>28</sup> With the help of Edwards's editorial hand, Brainerd's missionary journal set a "pattern of pilgrimage, of life as a spiritual journey through the world" which was fraught with "wandering, self-denial, and loneliness" (Rivers 196-97). Marrant, too, utilizes these tropes in his *Journal*. Isabel Rivers observes that Brainerd's *Account* "encourage[d] others to imitate him" and ultimately "underlies the narratives of [future] traveling preachers" (197). Brainerd's *Account* remained popular throughout the latter half of the eighteenth-century, and was endorsed by clergy.<sup>29</sup> The missionary journal genre was therefore an established literary tradition which provided Marrant with a template to argue his ministerial authority and the spiritual legitimacy of his mixed congregants in Nova Scotia. And, like Occom's adaption of the execution sermon, Marrant's revision of the missionary journal for the benefit of blacks and Mi'kmaq peoples carried an additional symbolic challenge to the colonizing discourse of white evangelical writers.

Occom shows an awareness of the perceived novelty of a Native preacher and author in the introduction to *A Sermon Preached, at the Execution of Moses Paul*. He writes: “as it comes from an uncommon quarter, it may induce people to read it, because it is from an Indian” (*Collected Writings* 177). Occom’s expectations were indeed correct: his *Sermon* caused a sensation in New England for many years after its publication (Lopenzina 298).<sup>30</sup> Occom would have been aware of the literary tradition of printed sermons and, more specifically, the execution sermon: over two thirds of colonial American execution sermons appeared in print after 1730 (Cohen, *Pillars* 10). Occom’s *Sermon* appeared in at least twelve editions between 1772 and 1774, which speaks to the continued popularity of the genre as well as his celebrity status following Paul’s execution (Cohen 10). Execution sermons were a popular genre of reading in New England since 1674, and early on were understood by their authors and readers as regulators of social and religious norms (Cohen 4-6).

For Marrant and Occom, revising these genres had a dual purpose. On the one hand, it allowed them to assert their arguments to larger audiences, as many people in the transatlantic world were already familiar with the genres. On the other, adapting these genres to suit their unique individual and communal needs symbolically challenged prejudicial EuroAmerican discourse. As willful proponents of New Light theology, Marrant and Occom argued the need for a firm spiritual foundation in Christ. While many white evangelicals and missionary schools sought to erase Native and black communal identity, Marrant and Occom fought for spiritual and communal solidarity—to be able to worship and live according to one’s own unique social structures without the threat of

forced EuroAmerican acculturation. The egalitarian principles of the Awakening encouraged Marrant and Ocom to demand such possibilities, and their savvy understanding of evangelical print genres provided with the tools to assert their unique goals.

By reading Marrant's and Ocom's writings as conscious revisions of evangelical genres, we can view them and other nonwhite writers as specific shapers of Awakening discourse. New Light theology was essential to Marrant's and Ocom's spiritual and social philosophies. Situating them as not only contributors but reformers of Awakening discourse reorients how we understand their writing. By examining Marrant and Ocom as reformers of Awakening discourse via the adaption of evangelical genres, I move away from current scholarship which reads both writers as only significant participants in the socially-minded ideas of the Great Awakening. This shift of reading Marrant, Ocom, and Bryan's slaves as reformers provides a new understanding of black and Native American writing as generative of a non-EuroAmerican evangelical discourse.

This omission is pervasive in contemporary scholarship on early black and Native writers. For example, in her influential study *American Lazarus*, Joanna Brooks contends that Marrant's *Journal* "is a consciously crafted account of a covenant community struggling to realize its prophetic destiny" (89). Brooks explains that Marrant selected specific biblical passages which "bore several powerful implications" for the black communities in Nova Scotia. Specifically, they "posit blackness as a maker of chosenness" and "indicate that black people have a specific covenant relationship with God" (94). Marrant's intent, argues Brooks, is to "call the community to recognize and to

realize its chosenness [...] as actors in their own divinely intended history” (95). Brooks’s reading of Marrant’s theological design is indeed influential to this project. However, she does not consider Marrant’s *Journal* as a conscious adaption of the evangelical missionary journal, nor does she explore in detail how Marrant’s application of New Light theology shifts our understanding of Awakening discourse. My reading of Marrant’s *Journal* reorients our study of the text because I make a specific connection between genre revision and the assertion of a black Atlantic New Light theology.

I see a similar gap in Occom scholarship. Some Native scholars neglect to see Occom’s use of genre adaptation as a means of crafting a Native New Light theology. In *Removable Type*, for example, Phillip Round situates Occom as an adept New Light preacher and sermon writer who used “every tool of the New Light performance semiotic” in order to argue for Native solidarity (67). Round’s study of Occom, however, does not go beyond identifying the preacher as a participant in Native-based New Light evangelicalism. I argue that by utilizing the conventions of the execution sermon, Occom is more than a participant: he effectively brings the egalitarian principles of New Light theology to task, thus reshaping the scope and direction of Awakening discourse. Occom’s *Sermon* redirects how we need to understand the New Light stir of the 1770s: as an Awakening discourse by and for Native peoples.<sup>31</sup>

Chapter one begins with a discussion of South Carolina planter elite Jonathan Bryan’s slaves. I follow Laura Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein’s reconceptualization of early African American writing. In *Early African American Print Culture*, Cohen and Stein introduce alternative ways of designating and interpreting early

black authorship (1-19). I employ this framework in order to link the creation of Anne Dutton's *Letter to the Negros* with the slaves' subversive behavior, and ultimately illustrate the disturbance of white evangelical print culture via the slaves' performed agency. My framing of these slaves as emergent subjects is, to my knowledge, a new contribution to early (African) American studies. Stephen Stein's pair of articles published in the journal *Church History* merely determines the letter's authorship.<sup>32</sup> I then turn my attention to John Marrant's *Journal*.

Elrod offers a sharp reading of Marrant's well-known *Narrative*, but says little about his *Journal*—a text that distinctively employs New Light egalitarian principles in an adaption of the missionary journal, a popular genre for evangelists. In chapter two, my reading of Marrant's *Journal* contributes to the limited but foundational and immensely important analyses conducted by Joanna Brooks and John Saillant.<sup>33</sup> My analysis extends the work of Brooks and Saillant in its exploration of Marrant's adaption of New Light principles and revision of the missionary journal genre by showing how he not only adapts the missionary journal, but redefines it as a New Light black Atlantic discourse.<sup>34</sup>

In chapter three, my examination of O'Connell's *Sermon* contributes to both Native scholarship and early American religious studies. By examining O'Connell's adaption of evangelical rhetoric, a discourse implicated in the subjugation of Native peoples and, more specifically, Native clergy, I follow Drew Lopez's thesis of "red ink" writing in order to expand our understanding of O'Connell's *Sermon* (xi). In *Red Ink*, Lopez seeks to break down "the psychological hegemony of white Euro-American-Western culture" and "bear witness to what emerges when we begin to carefully disentangle Native voices

of the past from the sophisticated historical containments in which they have been held” (xii). While Lopenzina offers a valuable reading of Occom’s *Sermon*, he does not explore the importance of the Great Awakening in Occom’s revision of the execution sermon genre. I, therefore, contribute this reading to Native and early American literary scholarship following Lopenzina’s primary thesis. My analysis of Occom’s treatment of the execution sermon builds on early American religious historian Daniel A. Cohen’s seminal study of the genre, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace*. Cohen constructs a careful history of the execution sermon genre, detailing the genre’s reflection of socio-cultural shifts in New England. While Cohen offers crucial readings of some Native execution accounts, he says little about the influence of the Awakening on the development of these texts and almost nothing on Occom’s *Sermon*. My contextualization and analysis of Occom’s *Sermon* thus expands literary historians’ understanding of the execution sermon genre.

My conclusion underscores this dissertation’s contribution to literary scholarship by considering the need to reevaluate nonwhite writers’ reshaping of Awakening discourse during the Great Awakening and the New Light stir of the 1770s and 80s. In *To Tell a Free Story*, William L. Andrews reads Marrant’s *Narrative* as “something of an exercise in creative hearing.” Andrews contends that Marrant and other black writers can “hardly be seen as black in their stories” because “there is so little individualized expression or ethnic perspective divergent from the structures of discourse the Judeo-Christian literary and cultural tradition valorized” (36). My project directly challenges

such assertions by examining Marrant's little-studied *Journal* as, in fact, a dramatic example of authorial agency via the adaption of a popular evangelical genre of writing.

My dissertation also demands a reexamining of how nonwhites are discussed in historical studies of the Great Awakening and New Light stir. Thomas Kidd, for example, writes: “[s]uccess among these [black and Native] groups, who had historically displayed little interest in other Protestant overtures, helped validate the revivals” of the Great Awakening as a truly socially-inclusive movement (215). Writers of color far exceeded validating the multi-ethnic appeal of the Awakening and New Light stir; indeed, they demonstrated a savvy awareness of the matrixes of narrative, genre, and public performance as a means of counteracting the Euro-centrism of Awakening ideology. These writers of color generated a discourse of spiritual egalitarianism, personal agency, and communal empowerment, ultimately shaping an Awakening discourse that is truly all-inclusive. My discussion finally leads to a call for including additional writers of color, such as Phillis Wheatley and Joseph Johnson (Mohegan). Like the writers discussed in this dissertation, Wheatley and Johnson also demand a critical reevaluation of their adaption of Awakening discourse during the New Light stir.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Nineteenth-century minister and historian Joseph Tracy is credited with coining the term “Great Awakening.” Tracy’s *The Great Awakening: A History of the Revival of Religion in the Time of Edwards and Whitefield* (1845) attempts to explain the seemingly miraculous eruption of religious fervor that swept through the American colonies in the 1730s and 40s. Tracy’s study is inspired by what historians now call the Second Great Awakening, which saw another large wave of evangelism move across the United States in the 1830s. For more on Tracy, see Frank Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening.”* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Lambert, *“Pedlar in Divinity”: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994. Also, see Susan O’Brien, “A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755.” *The American Historical Review* 91.4 (1986): 811-32; Peter Charles Hoffer, *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Written Word.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2011; and Jerome Dean Mahaffey, *The Accidental Revolutionary: George Whitefield & the Creation of America.* Waco: Baylor UP, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the European and colonial American origins of eighteenth-century revivalism, see Thomas S. Kidd’s *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2007. 24-68.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personalities: Popular Voice and the Trial of American Authorship.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. 85-86.



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<sup>5</sup> A few exceptions are William D. Pierson, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England*. Amherst: The U of Massachusetts P, 1988; Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008; and Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America*.

<sup>6</sup> Lambert, “Pedlar” 96-97.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 97-103.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Whitefield and Franklin’s professional relationship, see Peter Charles Hoffer’s *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield* and Lambert’s “Subscribing for Profits and Piety: The Friendship of Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 50. 3 (1993): 529-554.

<sup>9</sup> Lambert, *Inventing* 185-222.

<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the most vocal critic of Edwards and other New Lights was Charles Chauncy. Chauncy’s *Enthusiasm Described and Cautioned Against* (1741), published almost immediately after Edwards’s second reflection on the Northampton awakenings, *Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God* (1741), sharply criticized Edwards’s interpretation of conversions. Chauncy’s essay began a nasty pamphlet war between him and Edwards, and ultimately made a reputation for himself during this exchange as one of the prominent voices of the Old Lights. For more on Edwards’s debate with Chauncy and other Old Lights, see Philip F. Gura, *Jonathan Edwards: America’s Evangelical*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2005. 123-28; and Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”* 185-221.

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of Whitefield's popularity in colonial print culture, see Lambert, "Pedlar" 103-30.

<sup>12</sup> For additional examples, see Ruttenburg *Democratic Personality* 191-92.

<sup>13</sup> Patricia U. Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003. 124-25.

<sup>14</sup> I explore further in chapter one the controversy between spiritual and social equality among blacks in evangelical circles.

<sup>15</sup> Lambert, "Pedlar" 102-03.

<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of these preachers, see Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. For a detailed analysis of Brainerd and Sergeant, also see Laura M. Stevens, *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2006. 138-59.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of tribal and intertribal communication patterns, see Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010. 98-113.

<sup>18</sup> See Amy E. Den Ouden, *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. 41-56.

<sup>19</sup> "Letter to Eleazar Wheelock, 1769." *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology*. Ed. Kristina Bross and Hilary Wyss. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2008. 93-96.

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<sup>20</sup> See Michael Elliot, “‘This Indian Bait’: Samson Occom and the Voice of Liminality.” *Early American Literature*. 29.3 (1994): 233-53.

<sup>21</sup> Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening* 119-20, 127.

<sup>22</sup> See Jerome Dean Mahaffey’s *Preaching Politics: The Religious Rhetoric of George Whitefield and the Founding of a New Nation*. Waco: Baylor UP, 2007 and Nancy Ruttenberg’s *Democratic Personality: Popular Voice and the Trial of American Authorship*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. 83-119.

<sup>23</sup> See chapters three and four for detailed literary histories of the missionary journal and execution sermon.

<sup>24</sup> Joanna Brooks, 47; Brooks, “The Unfortunates: What the Life Spans of Early Black Books Tells Us About Book History.” *Early African American Print Culture*. Eds. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein. Philadelphia: U of Penn P, 2012. 40-53.

<sup>25</sup> For more information on the popularity and publication history of Marrant’s *Narrative*, see Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr eds., *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas*. New York: St Martin’s P, 1995. 1-20, 72-73.

<sup>26</sup> In her essay “The Unfortunates,” Joanna Brooks speculates that after returning to London, Marrant may have been inspired to publish his missionary journal based on the popularity of his *Narrative* (45).

<sup>27</sup> I discuss the missionary journal’s history in greater detail in chapter three.

<sup>28</sup> Kidd, 196-97.

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<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Carroll Reilly and David D. Hall, 387; Reilly and Hall, “Customers and the Market for Books.” *A History of the Book in America, Volume One: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*. Eds, Hugh Amory and David D. Hall. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. 387-99.

<sup>30</sup> I address in more detail the reception of Occom’s *Sermon* in chapter four.

<sup>31</sup> The New Light stir refers to a revival of Great Awakening New Light theology and the sharp increase in evangelical denominations in the United States and Canada. Thomas Kidd, for example, offers a timeline for the New Light stir to be roughly between 1776 and 1783 (309). Occom’s *Sermon* was delivered and published in 1772. In *America’s Religions*, however, Peter W. Williams suggests that the New Light stir had begun prior to the American Revolution (186).

<sup>32</sup> See chapter two for specific discussion of Stein’s articles.

<sup>33</sup> Scholarship on Marrant’s *Journal* is primarily by Brooks and Saillant. In addition to Brooks’s American Lazarus, see Brooks, “John Marrant’s *Journal*: Providence and Prophecy in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic.” *The North Star: A Journal of African American Religious History* 3.1 (1999): 1-21; and Saillant, ““Wipe away All Tears from Their Eyes’: John Marrant’s Theology in the Black Atlantic, 1785-1808.” *Journal of Millennial Studies* 1.2 (1999): <http://www.mille.org/publications/journal.html>.

<sup>34</sup> I specifically engage Brooks’ and Saillant’s scholarship in chapter three.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EMERGENCE OF BLACK LITERARY AGENCY IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

People of color adapted both the behavioral norms and literary genres generated from the First Great Awakening as means of resisting the dominant racist logics of the transatlantic world. As I contend in this chapter, Jonathan Bryan's slaves challenged the 1740 Slave Code which forbid public congregation, especially emotionally charged religious gatherings. These literate slaves insisted on worshipping in public, in part, thanks to the encouragement of their master. However, it was the slaves' assertion of personal agency, a defiance of South Carolina's slavery politics, which captivated George Whitefield who, in turn, encouraged fellow evangelical and writer Anne Dutton to publicly address their actions. Dutton's published letter to the slaves, addressing them as active participants in the revivals sweeping South Carolina, accomplished two important feats. First, Dutton's letter incorporates a text composed for black, enslaved readers into the white dominated, transatlantic evangelical print network. Second, by rhetorically framing the slaves as subjects and active participants rather than passive objects, a common pattern in evangelical writing throughout the eighteenth century, Dutton's letter gives public agency to the slaves. Their conscious decision to worship vigorously and loudly in public, adapting the behavioral norms of white worshippers, authored the emergence of black authorial agency. By illustrating the slaves' resistance as authorship, scholars of the literary Black Atlantic can further articulate the ways in which enslaved

and free blacks produced writing that undercut the persistent racism and oppression inflicted on themselves and their communities.

In a recent article, Brigit Brander Rasmussen uncovers the prohibitive ramifications of the 1740 South Carolina Slave Code.<sup>1</sup> Following the 1739 Stono Slave Rebellion, South Carolina legislators declared that slaves could no longer congregate in public without strict white supervision, inhabit taverns or overnight lodgings unaccompanied by whites, nor acquire any skills “whatsoever” for literacy or writing (201). Rasmussen draws important connections among the 1740 Slave Code, restrictions on slave literacy, and persistent racist discourse privileging white authorship. Of course, writers such as Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, John Marrant, and Frederick Douglass made their literary careers challenging the racist Enlightenment logic that argued personal agency is contingent on the ability to express one’s self in print. The prohibition of slave literacy, Rasmussen observes, “suggests that tight control of and racialized exclusion from the written sphere were seen as crucial to the condition and institution of slavery in the colony and beyond.” Indeed, writing in the “arts and sciences signified the ability to reason and thus helped define, in the Enlightenment, what it meant to be human—marking some human beings as inherently superior” (202). Rasmussen locates the 1740 Slave Code as a crucial historical text that regulates black education and authorship, thus further ensuring the inseparability of the enslaved black body and black consciousness.

Such legal pressures were not entirely successful, however. The First Great Awakening provided some slaves with an alternative form of expression that ultimately

undercut colonial control over black public agency. Indeed, the Great Awakening brought to South Carolina an intense religious fervor before unseen. Whites and slaves alike were caught up in the great tide of evangelicalism inspired by itinerate preacher George Whitefield and the influx of religious writings in South Carolina. Following Whitefield's arrival in Charleston in 1739, southerners from Virginia to Georgia saw a marked increase in published evangelical writings, such as front matter in newspapers, pamphlets, sermons, and missionary journals.<sup>2</sup> In short, with the help of publisher Benjamin Franklin, Whitefield generated a culture of print in the American colonies that intrigued, chaffed, and inspired lay and clergy alike.<sup>3</sup> The increase in religious print news and ephemera throughout the American colonies and greater British Atlantic world not only encouraged greater print manufacturing and distribution, but also created a shared imagined community of religious participation for both whites and blacks, free and enslaved (Anderson 33-34).

Current scholarship in early African American print culture is reconsidering the dimensions of the discursive origins of the literary black Atlantic. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein's edited collection of essays, *Early African American Print Culture*, reconsiders the relationship between "'print,' a technology that fixes impressions, and 'print culture,' a world in which print both integrates with other practices and assumes a life of its own." For Cohen and Stein, such rigid distinctions do not hold up when studying, for example, early African American writing because of its historically vexed association with white editors, publishers, and sellers. Therefore, the critical thrust of the collected essays is towards an "expansive understanding of print,"

examining “the ways that print affects (and sometimes effects) personhood, circulates to unintended readers, is subject to reiteration and reappropriation, solicits publics that may not recognize themselves as such, and allows equally for representation and misrepresentation” (7). In short, Cohen, Stein, and their fellow contributors recognize that print and print culture operate in a similarly fluid and dynamic manner.

These critics also contest the more traditional argument that African American literature, especially in its earliest form, is limited to black authorship.<sup>4</sup> Cohen and Stein argue that one of the critical contentions channeled throughout the collected essays is the positing of “an alternative paradigm to the study of ‘black authorship’ that has for so long been the only significant paradigm by which to estimate African American print culture, and African American literature more generally.” Cohen and Stein are careful to point out, however, that they and their fellow contributors, by reconsidering accepted qualifiers of traditional authorship, “d[o] not and should not displace” “attention to racialization or its historically lived experience” (14). Rather, they urge for the recognition of early black “narrative protagonists,” “performers,” “booksellers,” “editors,” and “signifiers” as “participants in a rapidly emergent media culture whose impact on everyday life scholars are only beginning to understand” (14-15). If we are to engage in Cohen and Stein’s critical schema, then this list should also include the slave recipients of Anne Dutton’s 1743 *Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in America*.

Scholars of the First Great Awakening have clearly argued the correlation between the revivals and the expansion of colonial print. The circulation of (anti) revivalist news, letters, journals and diaries, autobiographies, and sermons fashioned a



culture of eager readers and listeners on both sides of the Atlantic. More specifically, however, the evangelical-inspired dialogue circulating in print throughout the British American colonies contributed to the formation of spiritual sovereignty, to an imagined community of believers, regardless of which side of the debate they stood. Yet, critical discussion of this developmental moment in early American culture continues to maintain the position, implicitly or not, that this print culture is entirely bound to white participation. As the scholarly record stands, black participation in print culture, religious and otherwise, does not occur until 1760. Subsequent to 1760, this period also marks the beginning of what we call Black Atlantic literature. Writers such as Briton Hammon, Jupiter Hammon, Ukawsaw James Gronniosaw, and Phillis Wheatley emerge, in part, out of the post-Awakening stir to meet evangelicals' demands for public demonstrations of black conversion.

There are, however, reasons to consider Bryan's slaves as the earliest black agents to mediate colonial American print culture. I see this mediation as occurring in two important ways. The first is the slaves' adaption of New Light Christianity and acquisition of literacy. As reports such as Whitefield's and Johann Martin Boltzius's show, Bryan's slaves had adapted and were practicing their faith freely in the open. They were preaching to each other and teaching one another how to read scripture. Their resolve to participate in the religious fervor active in much of South Carolina ultimately garnered the attention of Whitefield who, in turn, promoted their actions to Dutton, asking her also to address them in her public writings. The publication and transatlantic circulation of Dutton's *Letter* broadened the Anglo-centric parameters of the British

Atlantic evangelical community. Thus, no longer can we ascribe a white-participant parameter around colonial American print culture. Second, drawing from current scholarship in early African American print culture, I urge an assessment of Dutton's *Letter* as being co-authored by Bryan's slaves. Their dynamic and unique participation in the larger faith community broke through the Eurocentric sphere of public evangelicalism. By their actions of empowerment, these slaves created their own public personas. They, in short, subverted their public and political marginality as non-entities banned from engaging in public dialogue by forming their own culture of education and faith. It seems only fitting, then, to reevaluate the emergence of black Atlantic literary production, and to establish Bryan's slaves as participants in the literary Black Atlantic.

I argue in this chapter that we must address Bryan's slaves as influencers and active participants in the formation of black literary agency. Drawing from the theoretical framework posited by Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein in their edited collection of essays, *Early African American Print Culture*, I conclude that Bryan's slaves are, in fact, participants in eighteenth-century transatlantic evangelical print discourse.

Critics such as Vincent Carretta and Eve Tavor Bannet rightfully identify the First Great Awakening as generating the potential for the emergence of black Atlantic writers.<sup>5</sup> But we should also consider that the writings of Briton Hammon, Jupiter Hammon, and especially Ukawsaw James Gronniosaw were only possible because people of African descent, most notably South Carolina planter Jonathan Bryan's slaves, influenced the composition of the earliest Black Atlantic text. Bryan's slaves asserted their agency as

ecclesiastical and literary agents, thus opening up colonial public discourse for the emergence of autonomous black authorship. These slaves' participation in the evangelical community captured the attention of George Whitefield during his second American tour. In turn, Whitefield reported his excitement and wonder at these slaves' enthusiasm back to his colleague and friend, Anne Dutton in England. In 1743, Dutton took the opportunity at both the behest of Whitefield and the print debate regarding the Christianization of slavery circulating throughout the colonies to compose a public letter to Bryan's slaves, praising their piety and subservience. Dutton's *A Letter to the Negroes* maintained the evangelical position that slavery is compatible with Christianity. But it nonetheless included Bryan's slaves as readers and participants in the transatlantic epistolary print community, a shift these bondspeople inspired by their acquisition of literacy and engagement with the evangelicalism of the Great Awakening.

#### **“The Most Beautiful Order of Housekeeping”: The Print Legacy of the Bryan Plantation Slaves**

On December 23, 1800, Rev. Andrew Bryan, former slave of wealthy South Carolina planter Jonathan Bryan, wrote a letter to the Rev. Dr. Rippon, thanking him for his material support. Of particular interest to Bryan were the books sent by Rippon, for Bryan saw print as vital to a healthy religious community. Andrew Bryan writes:

All the books mentioned in your truly condescending and affectionate letter, came safe, and were distributed according to your humane directions. You can scarcely conceive, much less than I describe, the gratitude excited by so seasonably and precious a supply of the means of knowledge and grace, accompanied with benevolent proposals of further assistance.<sup>6</sup>

Bryan's letter was composed during his time as pastor at the Second African Baptist Church of Savannah, Georgia. In addition to Bryan, Henry Francis, former slave of Colonel Leroy Hammond, also shared in the pastoral duties at that church. Like Bryan, Francis' talents for religious oration attracted the attention of both blacks and whites. Francis was, in fact, granted manumission after some wealthy white attendees purchased his freedom. Andrew Bryan, on the other hand, purchased his freedom following the death of Jonathan Bryan.<sup>7</sup>

Andrew Bryan's remarkable ascension from slave to one of the first ordained black Baptist clergy is emblematic of some African Americans' adaption of the religious ideals preached during the First Great Awakening. Born to slaves in 1737 on Jonathan Bryan's plantation at Goose Creek, South Carolina, Andrew "converted under the preaching of [another slave preacher] George Liele" (Davis 123-24). Milton C. Sernett writes that "Liele, baptized around 1774, preached in the area of Silver Bluff, South Carolina," and "founded a black congregation in 1777 at Yama Craw, outside Savannah." During Liele's absences, which oftentimes found him in Jamaica with his master, Bryan "reorganized" the work begun by Liele in Savannah, "and established the First African Church" there in 1788 ("Letters" 44). According to John W. Davis, Liele's religious conversions were largely unchallenged by whites because "he would not receive any slaves who had not the permission of their owners." "This not only increased the membership of the church," observes Davis, "but it made friends for their cause among the masters and overseers" (123).<sup>8</sup> Not only was Liele's cooperation with white slave owners beneficial, but he also preached while the British remained in control of the

colony. Once Bryan took over in 1788, conditions had worsened for slave mobility due to an increase in slave runaways. Many white slave owners restricted their slaves' movements and demanded Bryan cease preaching, as it enticed slaves to travel outside the physical boundaries of the plantation. Bryan refused and was "twice imprisoned," whipped, and "cut and bled abundantly" (124). Bryan's perseverance paid off, however, and he was eventually granted another location for worship by Jonathan Bryan. Andrew Bryan continued preaching well after the Revolution, eventually returning to Savannah, and later dying in 1812.

Andrew Bryan's story is notable to historians and sociologists interested in tracing the origins of African American religious communities. But his life (and, of course, the founding of the First Black Baptist Church) is also illustrative of the praxis that stemmed from some African slaves' adaption of ideals promoted during the First Great Awakening. His recognition of the power of print, as noted in his letter to Rippon, draws from a unique set of circumstances, events that altered lives and communities in Scotland and, especially, the American colonies.

Andrew Bryan's connection to the First Great Awakening and the importance of print stand alone, however, in scholarly conversations on the period. His only real presence in scholarship is his connection to early African American Christianity: scholars of black colonial revivalism, such as Eugene D. Genovese, Mechal Sobel, Alan Gallay, and others, say nothing of slaves' influence on religious public thought aside from being the subject of larger debates over slavery, and functioning as entities that bear the brunt of shifting Christian missionary politics. In his chapter on black preachers, Genovese

notes that “blacks preached with some ease during the eighteenth century,” but Genovese almost immediately digresses into anecdotes from the antebellum period, leaving the topic of slaves’ interaction with the awakenings unexplored (*Jordan* 257). Sobel, on the other hand, offers ample discussion on slaves’ participation in the Virginia awakenings of the 1750s. In line with Genovese, Sobel contends that “blacks and whites shared spiritual experiences, and the effect was deep and lasting in both communities” (*World* 180). But outside of a historical analysis of Virginia religiosity, Sobel’s only discussion of a black-affiliated print contribution is John Marrant’s *Narrative*, published decades after the revivals of the 1740s and 50s (183). Galloway, too, in *The Formation of the Planter Elite*, gives a detailed overview of the awakenings, looking mostly at South Carolina. His discussion of South Carolina evangelical print culture is insightful for any scholar researching the topic. However, he does not mention slaves’ impact on print during this period, aside from being passive subjects in debates on slavery.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we must begin by studying Andrew Bryan and his origins as a means of broadening the history of black participation in American evangelicalism and consequently print culture.<sup>10</sup>

In 1742, the slaves on Jonathan Bryan’s plantation joined the transatlantic evangelical print culture, moving from rhetorically crafted passive subjects discussed in print to readers and participants in the composition of one of the earliest black Atlantic texts. In his article “George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence,” Stephen J. Stein argues that Whitefield is the author of a 1742 anonymous epistle entitled *A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in America. And Particularly to Those Lately Called out of Darkness, into God’s Marvelous Light, at Mr. Jonathan Bryan’s in South*

*Carolina*. Stein bases his argument on the Whitefieldian structure and rhetoric of the letter, and on the well-known association between Whitefield and Bryan. In a follow-up article, however, Stein recants his thesis. In “A Note on Anne Dutton, Eighteenth-Century Evangelical,” Stein concludes that “Anne Dutton, not George Whitefield, wrote the anonymous letter” (486). Stein remarks that this conclusion is based on an “oblique reference to Dutton [which] appears in *The Christian History*, an early American periodical supportive of the Great Awakening” (485).<sup>11</sup> The reference in question comes from editor Thomas Prince, Jr., who included writings in *History* by Scottish evangelical James Robe. I cite Robe’s notice in full, published in Prince’s *History*:

I received a Letter about two weeks ago, directed to them [that is, the youth of his congregation], from an *English Gentlewoman*, who is Author of the *Letter to the Negroes converted in America*. It is so good, and may be so encouraging, and useful to all such *young Ones*, who set themselves to seek the LORD, That I give it a Place here. (Stein 485)

Robe’s mentioning of Dutton’s *Letter to the Negroes* in the context of Dutton’s other community-minded writings is significant. Robe’s comment indicates that Dutton’s London-published *Letter* made its rounds throughout evangelical communities in England and Scotland. Its circulation also underscores the influence it and other writings by Dutton had on the enthusiastic desire to communicate across the Atlantic, furthering an emphasis on Christian community-building. Prince’s inclusion of Robe’s account in his *History* emphasizes the transatlantic presence of the Great Awakening, a point discussed in detail by Tim D. Hall.<sup>12</sup> But it also presented readers with the importance of

a particular subject matter: slavery, or, more specifically, the slave as reader and participant in the transatlantic evangelical community.

Dutton's *Letter* was inspired by both her close friendship and correspondence with Whitefield and what she deemed to be the remarkable piety and education of Bryan's slaves. Stein observes that Dutton's "role [in evangelical matters] increased substantially as Whitefield's circle of acquaintances and influence widened." "At his urging," writes Stein, "she assumed a part of the burden of corresponding with the widely-scattered segments of the evangelical community, including those in America." Moreover, in "July 1741 the evangelist again asked Dutton to correspond with his 'dear little orphans' in Georgia. 'I would have you also write to Mr. J\_\_\_B\_\_\_, a converted planter,' and to others in the area" (489). Stein writes that in "late 1741 on Bryan's plantation twelve black slaves were converted." Stein continues, noting that "[n]ews of that 'fresh awakening' among his friends in America caused Whitefield to write in February 1742, 'I am informed, that twelve negroes, belonging to a planter lately converted at the Orphan house, are savingly brought home to Jesus Christ.'" "The same news," writes Stein, "provided the occasion for Dutton's *Letter to the Negroes*." "[Dutton] wrote with confidence to the blacks because she was a correspondent of their master and fully accustomed to writing such pastoral letters" (489-90). Dutton's composition of the *Letter* was also contingent on the influence Bryan's slaves were having on their local religious culture. They, in fact, willed their participatory actions into being, thus establishing their presence in Dutton's text. The slaves would have been well-aware of the passing of the 1740 Slave Code, which outlawed any form of public



gathering, including worship. Their defiance of the Slave Code was an enactment of subjectivity, a declaration of human agency in the face of dehumanizing legal opposition. By gathering together, reading and singing hymns, these slaves asserted an emergent agency which formed an alternative Awakening discourse. Where dominant Awakening rhetoric positioned blacks as passive entities in need of white Christian charity, Bryan's slaves situated themselves as evangelical participants and authors of their own civil disobedience.

The influence of the slaves' actions and their influence on Dutton's subsequent publication apparently made its way into South Carolina print culture. In *Virginia Genealogies*, Horace Edwin Hayden contends that Dutton's *Letter* was "republished by Jonathan Bryan in South Carolina," due to the "great attention" that "was awakened in behalf of the religious instruction among the negroes" (208). Unfortunately, evidence of where or when Bryan republished Dutton's *Letter* remains unknown. Nonetheless, the transatlantic, circuitous journey of Dutton's *Letter* establishes the text as an emergent black Atlantic document.

The circulation of Dutton's *Letter* throughout the evangelical transatlantic community signals a turn in how scholars should discuss colonial South Carolina print culture and the origins of early black Atlantic authorship. The suggestion that Jonathan Bryan republished Dutton's *Letter* is striking because it directly and publicly includes slaves as readers and participants in the dynamic print culture of the colonies, most notably in South Carolina. Furthermore, Prince's inclusion of Robe's notice in his widely read *History* and Jonathan Bryan's apparent republishing of the *Letter* in South Carolina

signal an evolution in African peoples' ecclesiastical association. The inclusion of Dutton's *Letter* in South Carolina evangelical print culture transforms slaves from the passive, unidentifiable entities in SPG accounts, Edwards's conversion narratives, and Whitefield and Hugh Bryan writings into active readers and participants in the authorship of Dutton's widely read *Letter*. Through Dutton's *Letter*, as it circulated in print and manuscript in South Carolina and the Atlantic world, slaves were recognized as participants in an imaged community of like-minded faithful. The slaves' practice of evangelical behavior, reading, and possibly writing formed an alternative Awakening discourse, one which illustrates black agency via the behavioral norms of the Eurocentric Great Awakening. Thus, Dutton's *Letter* is the earliest example of black Atlantic print culture and set an important precedent for the emergence of formal black authorship in 1760.

Following Whitefield's and then Hugh Bryan's poorly-received letters deploring slavery and clergy irresponsibility, South Carolina evangelicals thought it time to ease their printed criticism of slavery practices and instead focus on private education. Alexander Garden, Charleston entrepreneur and critic of Whitefield's and Hugh Bryan's attack on clergy, established the Charleston Negro School in 1742. Garden, an affiliate of the SPG, "had faith in the Nergoes' ability to succeed and remained steadfast in his efforts to provide South Carolina Negroes with enlightenment [...]Garden firmly believed that slaves could be trained to teach other slaves, in hopes of creating a perpetual cycle of plantation education among Negroes in South Carolina" (Comminey 363). Such a plan was also adopted concomitantly by Jonathan Bryan. In 1743, the same year Dutton

composed and printed her *Letter* in London, Johann Martin Boltzius, fellow evangelical and friend of the Bryans, visited Jonathan Bryan's plantation. While there, Boltzius carefully observed Bryan's slave community. He notes, "[at Bryan's plantation, I] found the most beautiful order in the house-keeping [by which he 'meant the entire economy of a household, especially the agriculture'] and among the Negroes, of whom several were honestly converted to God." Boltzius continues, stating "[a]lthough the people in the land say that his [Bryan's] Negroes do nothing but pray and sing and thereby neglect their work, this calumny is clearly contradicted [...] He and his Negroes are experiencing the truth of the words of Christ" (qtd in Galloway 47). Boltzius's allusion to Jonathan Bryan and his slaves' affiliation with scriptural analysis, "experiencing the truth of the words of Christ," is emblematic of Bryan's larger agenda: to teach slaves to be literate so they can read scripture and, fulfilling Garden's pedagogical plan, be self-reliant, independent perpetuators of Christian education.

Like Jonathan Bryan's slaves, Hugh's slaves were also adapting their evangelical instruction, practicing amongst themselves in private. Two years earlier, in 1741, travelers near Hugh Bryan's plantation reported hearing "a Moorish slave woman [...] singing a spiritual near the water's edge [...] She had been a part of those 'great Bodies of Negroes' who assembled for 'Religious Worship'" (Schmidt 248). Leigh Eric Schmidt concludes that the Bryans' "evangelicalism could readily be appropriated by slaves and transformed into their own Christianity" (248). Indeed, Dutton's *Letter*, inspired by Whitefield's enthusiastic observations, acknowledged this diasporic community of African slaves as true participants in the southern awakenings. Their

unique affiliation with a benevolent master provided them the opportunity to organize their own faith communities. This ultimately gave them the ability to practice their faith-based literacy and make an indelible impression on the transatlantic evangelical print network. If we are to rely on Hayden's notice of Bryan's republishing of Dutton's *Letter* in South Carolina, such an impression also found its way into the South Carolina readership, which should encourage scholars to rethink the ways we discuss colonial (and early) American print culture studies. Rather than read the colonial print sphere as a network based on and for EuroAmerican interests, we may also consider blacks as readers and subjects of print media. In short, colonial print culture included blacks as readers and subjects of print discourse, in large part due to the slaves' adaption of Awakening behavioral norms.

The First Great Awakening had myriad effects on colonial American and early American culture. Former slave Andrew Bryan's leadership of the First Black Baptist Church, which remains a formidable religious institution some two hundred years after his death, speaks to the enormous influence the southern awakenings had on planters and slaves. Most importantly, however, was the slaves' adaption of an evangelical theology which initially sought to convert bodies rather than rethink the makings of an early arrangement of a collective identity. As Tim D. Hall argues, "the periodical [and newspaper] played an important role in the emergence of a provincial public sphere of print discourse." "In the hands of Thomas Prince Jr. [and others]," writes Hall, "the periodical also became a powerful tool for the construction of what Benedict Anderson has termed an 'imagined community,' not of nation, but of a transatlantic company of

people transformed by empire-wide revival” (31). As Nancy Ruttenburg attests in *Democratic Personality*, the First Great Awakening’s influence on a coalescing of national identity, an early threading together of the very body politic that will declare American national sovereignty in 1776, began with the dynamic print culture of the 1740s (85-86). We now need to acknowledge the participation of slaves in this print sphere.

### **“An Inconsiderable Evil,” Comparatively Speaking: Religion, Slavery, and the Formation of South Carolina Evangelical Print Culture**

The polarization occurring between New England and Mid-Atlantic New and Old Lights during Whitefield’s first American preaching tour was concurrent with other troubles brewing in South Carolina. In 1739, the Low Country witnessed or read about a slave uprising about fifteen miles outside of Charleston, South Carolina, known as the Stono Rebellion. While not directly related to the preaching of New Light evangelicals, the slaves’ violent revolt had proved to many southern planters that slaves were clearly opposed to being kept in bondage. Whitefield’s landing in South Carolina for what would be his second American visit, but first American preaching tour, could not have been fraught with more tension. Shortly after his arrival, Whitefield took note of the deplorable conditions under which slaves suffered. Unable to stay silent on the issue, Whitefield published in 1740 *A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina*. In the *Letter*, Whitefield chastised southern slave owners for their negligence of slaves’ physical and spiritual well-being. At one point, Whitefield observes:

How you will receive it I know now; whether you will accept it in Love, or be offended with me...I am uncertain. Whatever be the Event, I must inform you in the Meekness and Gentleness of *Christ*, that I think God has a Quarrel with you for you Abuse and Cruelty to the poor Negroes ...Your Dogs are caressed and fondled at your Tables: But your Slaves, who are frequently styled Dogs or Beasts, have not an equal Privilege. They are scarce permitted to pick up the Crumbs which fall from their Masters' Tables.<sup>13</sup>

Whitefield's comments clearly admonished slave owners for their dehumanization of slaves and put pressure on the absence of Christian learning in the institution of slavery.<sup>14</sup>

Whitefield does, however, allude to what many readers believed was a rationale for slaves to rise up against their masters. "[C]onsidering what Usage they commonly meet with," ponders Whitefield, "I have wondered, that we have not more Instances of Self-Murder among the Negroes, or that they have not more frequently rose up in Arms against their Owners" (113). Even though Whitefield goes on to acknowledge with scriptural authority slaves' "relative Duties" as "the Yoke of Bondage" in "all lawful Things, to their Masters" (114), Southern planters saw Whitefield's remarks as offensive and dangerous, especially given the close temporal proximity to the Stono Rebellion.

The Stono Rebellion was the most violent slave revolt South Carolina had seen up until that point. The uprising demonstrated, to the horror of whites, that slaves were not sentient beings void of personal and cultural histories. Just as there were pockets of first generation slaves who came from various tribes and regions, speaking disparate languages, there were other groups who shared similar-enough origins where language, customs, and even experiences in military service overlapped. Many slaves, in fact, shared common histories and experiences—especially the rebellious group of Angolanese slaves near the rural area of Stono Creek, South Carolina. Historian Jack Shuler observes

in *Calling Out Liberty* that by 1729, when South Carolina officially became a royal colony and the importation of slaves from Africa and stop-overs in the Caribbean was rapidly increasing, plantation violence, disease, heat, and constant humidity were clearly taking its toll on the slaves. By 1738, “relations between Spain and Britain were dissolving rapidly, especially since Spain had published a royal edict in 1738 promising freedom to any slave who could escape to Florida” (69). As a result, some slaves attempted to flee and, with some success, did reach northern Florida. However, an organized effort was made by slaves in 1739 to hack and shoot their way to the Spanish. On Sunday, September 9, 1739, “about twenty Kongolese slaves led by a man named Jemmy or Cato,” found their way to Stono Bridge, “about fifteen miles outside of Charles Town next to a road that followed the coastline southward” (70). These twenty men raided plantations and other homesteads, killing dozens of white men, women, and children. They also attempted to recruit other slaves along the way with varying success. The revolt was quickly put down, however, as Carolina militia men, who were better armed, killed the slaves. What lingered in the minds of many Carolinians, though, was a clear example of the slaves’ “propensity for multiple layers of communication and organization” (Shuler 73).

There are two competing theories regarding the causes and motivations for the Stono Rebellion. John K. Thornton contends that one motivational force behind the Stono Rebellion was the slaves’ urge to practice Catholicism, a liberty certainly encouraged by the Spanish. Thornton observes that “South Carolina slaves were in all likelihood not drawn from the Portuguese colony of Angola (as the account implies) but from the

kingdom of Kongo (in modern Angola), which was a Christian country and had a fairly extensive system of schools and churches in addition to a high degree of literacy (at least for the upper class) in Portuguese.” Furthermore, writes Thornton, “the Kongolese were proud of their Christian and Catholic heritage, which they believed made them a distinctive people, and thus Kongolese slaves would have seen the Spanish offers in terms of freedom of religion (or rather, freedom of Catholic religion) as additionally attractive beyond promises of freedom in general” (76). Thornton’s interpretation of the Stono resistance, however, assumes that the primary motivations fueling the slaves’ resistance was a regional and ethnic commonality. In short, their shared origin of Angolan (Portuguese) Catholic folkways and, as Thornton observes, the possibility of time served in Angolan military service were primary forces in their violent, seemingly militaristic revolt.

Perry L. Kyles disagrees with Thornton’s analysis, however. Kyles argues that rather than ascribing regional and cultural origins as an organizing force of resistance, a critical impulse that is “somewhat static” in its reliance on ethno-cultural origins as a primary motivator, “the harsh conditions on Carolina plantations generated acts of resistance among oppressed men, women, and children who formed meaningful relationships, irrespective of their places of birth” (506, 503). Here, Kyles’ counterargument recalls Paul Gilroy’s widely influential concept of the “politics of transfiguration.” Gilroy writes: “[The politics of transfiguration] emphasizes the emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance and between that group and its



erstwhile oppressors.” “This is not,” writes Gilroy, “a counter-discourse but a counterculture that definitely reconstructs its own critical, intellectual, and moral genealogy” (37-38). Kyles’ reevaluation of the scholarship on the Stono Rebellion thus concludes that the slaves’ revolt was a diasporic response to the racialized, oppressive hierarchy of white South Carolina plantation culture rather than an enactment of ethno-cultural origins.<sup>15</sup>

Kyles’ thesis is important to my discussion for two reasons. First, his argument encourages scholarly attention to the formation of a diasporic community conjoined by the shared horrors of the Middle Passage, Caribbean seasoning, and the harsh treatment and policing of African peoples’ bodies and minds in colonial South Carolina.<sup>16</sup> Second, it underscores the vitality and assertiveness of a South Carolina slave culture that was responding and adapting to political and cultural changes in a world that actively excluded them. We know slaves were reacting to the evangelicalism of Whitefield and his fellow itinerant preachers, because the print war between Garden and Whitefield came to a brief truce over the mistreatment of slaves and their seemingly squandered potential as converts and ministers of the gospel. In other words, the responses of the enslaved to the awakenings in the Low Country were influencing public dialogue between Whitefield and Garden.

Responding to Whitefield’s criticism of slave owners in his *Letter to the Inhabitants*, Garden admitted that planters had indeed strayed from the Christian principle of open conversion. Agreeing with Whitefield, Garden concluded that planters “[took] little or no proper Care...of the Souls of their Slaves.”<sup>17</sup> Sylvia Frey and Betty

Wood contend that Garden's reaction "was because of the lack of 'one certain uniform Method of Teaching' bondpeople." Garden, instead, had in the works a plan to open a school for blacks in Charlestown with the intention of training blacks to eventually become self-sufficient in their teaching of reading, writing, and study of scripture. Frey and Wood assert that "Garden hoped that his institution would appeal to the planters as a way of nullifying the impact of the evangelical Protestantism already beginning to infiltrate the slave quarters of the Low Country" (72). But he also sincerely wished to nurture what he saw as a burgeoning demographic of converts. Garden wanted to see slaves' physical conditions improve and, if possible, steer them away from the fervor of New Light evangelicalism towards what he considered to be a more level-headed religious self-reliance.

During the early 1740s, the *South-Carolina Gazette* was awash with both regional and intercolonial talk of awakenings and was, at one point, a leader of awakening news in the colonies. Discussing the awakenings' presence in the *South-Carolina Gazette* during the early 1740s, Lisa Smith notes that "[n]o other region of the colonies experienced such lengthy paper wars with so many contributors" (80). Furthermore, "[t]he *Gazette* holds the distinction of printing the fourth-highest number of revival related items in the colonies during the years 1739-1748 with 149 items, behind only the *Boston Evening-Post*, *Boston Gazette*, and *Pennsylvania Gazette*." "In fact," writes Smith, "during 1740 and 1741, the *Gazette* printed more items on the revival than did any other newspaper in the colonies except the *New England Weekly Journal*" (76-77). The sheer volume of public discourse on the topic of evangelicalism, from the debates between Whitefield and

Garden to the many anonymous and pseudonymic editorials, clearly indicates readers' demand for the latest news on the topic.

As one would expect in a slave-based society, the *South-Carolina Gazette's* structure and content was geared towards white merchants and plantation and business owners. Hennig Cohen observes that, in fact, a "fairly typical subscriber, Dr. Richard Bohum Baker, paid [editor] Peter Timothy" for "subscriptions covering a period of two years and three months" (8). Indeed, for editor Peter Timothy, "[s]ubscriptions and advertising were the *Gazette's* two main sources of income," as were the inclusion of "unsolicited essays and poems, particularly writing of a satiric or controversial nature" (Cohen 7, 10). Advertisements and the inclusion of dialogues such as the exchange between Whitefield and Garden kept the *Gazette* running. But these discourses also further emphasized the readership and content of the newspaper. Timothy's *Gazette* was by and for white readers as was, by the very nature of colonial print culture, other colonial printings on the New Light/Old Light debate. People of color were not recognized as part of the formation of an intercolonial or even regional imagined community, but people of color may have accessed these popular printed debates.

Slaves, free blacks, and Native Americans were exposed to the religious debates of the awakenings through public spaces such as taverns and, of course, through interactions with itinerant preachers. During the colonial period, taverns were occupied by a variety of people: blacks, whites, and Native Americans. Even after the Slave Law of 1740, a consequence of the Stono Rebellion which prohibited blacks from publicly congregating or securing rooms or other lodgings in South Carolina, blacks still managed

to drink and socialize in public. Philip D. Morgan observes in his essay “Black Life in Eighteenth-Century Charleston,” that in 1744, “[a]n advertisement for a runaway slave mentioned a sighting at a tavern,” and in another account, “a mistress who objected to her hired slave’s failure to turn over his wages explained that the money was lost ‘either by Gaming or spend[ing] among the lattle Punch-Houses’” (207). Historian Donald R. Wright further widens the geographical scope of tavern patronage, writing that “[a] black/Indian/lower-class-white tavern culture existed in cities of any size” during the colonial period (143). Indeed, in his monograph *In Public Houses*, David Conroy writes: “In 1751 [a] Boston town meeting discussed the ‘great disorders and disturbances which have been frequently made’ by black and Indian servants collecting into ‘companies at night’ for drinking and gaming.” Conroy continues, writing that “[p]oor drinksellers, legal and illegal, undermined these [legal and communal] efforts by their readiness to sell to blacks, Indians, and white servants” (125-26). More went on in taverns than drinking and gaming, however.

Taverns were a site where public opinion was formed. In *Taverns and Drinking in Early America*, Sharon V. Salinger writes that “[t]averns could be depended upon to have the local newspaper, and at times it was read aloud” (56). It was, in fact, common for readers to “voic[e] their individual and collective opinions on topics ranging from local gossip to imperial politics” (Salinger 244). We must, therefore, consider the very real possibility that printed evangelical debates, sermons, journals, and advertisements were openly discussed in taverns. Allan Gallay agrees, writing: “[The First Great Awakening] brought a storm of interest to religion in colonial society and became the premier issue

discussed in taverns, newspapers, and pamphlets” (*Elite* 31). Unfortunately, how people of color responded to printings, public readings, and discussions on the awakenings is unknown. There is a strong likelihood, however, that people of color, literate and illiterate alike, accessed intercolonial awakening discourse via tavern culture.<sup>18</sup> There was also the matter of slaves’ direct contact with itinerant preachers such as Whitefield and his followers. It is at this meeting point that the most substantial evidence exists of slaves’ adaption of and influence on transatlantic awakening print culture.

### **Hugh Bryan, Millennialism, and the Low Country African Diaspora**

Hugh Bryan was perhaps one of Whitefield’s most radical disciples during his sojourn in South Carolina. On January 1, 1741, Bryan, a wealthy South Carolina land owner, warned the people of Charleston that the end was near. A few months earlier, in November of 1740, a fire swept through Charleston, claiming lives and destroying property.<sup>19</sup> For Bryan, such a calamity was no accident; the hand of God was at work, cleansing the city of sinners and reminding those wavering in faith that their physical and spiritual lives were hanging in the balance. On the first day of January, the *South Carolina Gazette* published Bryan’s letter, warning sinners of their impending doom:

The Lord hath spoken...His Drought hath spoken; His Diseases inflicted on us and our Cattle have spoken; the Insurrections of our Slaves have spoken...the yet later dreadful Fire of Charles-Town hath spoken Terror: And if we regard not this to lay it to Heart, humble ourselves, and repent truly of our Sins; the just God will yet pour out upon us more terrible Vials of his Wrath.<sup>20</sup>

Bryan’s apocalyptic rhetoric is indicative of a larger social dilemma. In January 1740, Whitefield arrived in South Carolina for what would be his second visit to the American

colonies. His first visit was to establish an orphanage, Bethesda, in Georgia. Pressing matters forced him to return to England which disallowed time for evangelizing. Shortly after his second trip to the colonies, however, Whitefield gained a group of followers including forty-one year old Hugh Bryan, along with his brother Jonathan and Jonathan's wife, Catherine. According to Leigh Eric Schimdt, "[t]hough Catherine died later that year [1740], the brothers kept in close contact with Whitefield and were among the most prominent backers of his orphanage, Bethesda, which soon became a notorious enclave of dissent on the outskirts of Savannah, Georgia" (239). The Bryans were indeed some of Whitefield's most prominent followers: they were wealthy land owners with a large cache of land and slave labor, resources Whitefield would later call upon to expand his orphanage.

The Bryans were also morally conflicted individuals, ready conduits for Whitefield's charisma and social-minded religiosity. Hugh, in particular, was susceptible to Whitefield's argument for the necessity of all Christians, laymen and clergy alike, to be born again in Christ. True Christian membership ultimately required a public proclamation of conversion. Those who had not or refused to participate in this ritual were, according to Whitefield and his followers, unworthy of preaching or receiving Christ's grace. But this was only part of the dilemma feeding Bryan's apocalyptic message. There was the matter of slavery, an ambivalent topic for the Bryans, the haunting memory of the Stono Rebellion, and of course, the Charleston fire that generated a fixation on millennial thinking.

Millennialism had made its way into colonial American religious discourse decades prior to Bryan's letter. Thomas Kidd observes that around the turn of the eighteenth century, many "evangelicals believed that they were participating in the worldwide spreading of the gospel. Some Protestants thought this growth might lead to the destruction of Roman Catholicism and Islam, the mass conversion of the Jews to Christianity, and the coming of the millennium" where Christ would return to a global, religiously homogenized community of saints eager to follow his rule (*The Great Awakening* 8). Such millennial thinking did not, however, remain contained in white religious communities. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), an Anglican Church ministry established in England in 1701, sought to address reports coming from British visitors writing from or returning from Southern plantations. These respondents were Anglican missionaries who, according to Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, "were scandalized by what they saw there: the brutal physical treatment of enslaved Africans and the virtually universal refusal of Christian planters to tend to the assumed spiritual needs of men and women who continued to cling tenaciously to the 'Ceremonies of Religion' and 'Customs' they had 'brought out of Africa'" (63). Along with the SPG's encouragement of literacy and personal faith in slave communities, millennial impulses were being embraced by some white worshipers.

Such apocalyptic thinking was not limited to whites, however; slaves, too, embraced scriptural ideas that supported a reordering of the world where earthly injustices would be met upon Christ's return. In a letter to the secretary of the SPG in 1710, South Carolina Reverend Francis Le Jau observed that while teaching slaves to

internalize sermons and read scripture certainly had its benefits, it also encouraged insubordination. Le Jau observed that the literacy protocols of the SPG encouraged one particular slave to be “very sober and [of] honest Liver;” however, it nonetheless instilled in him apocalyptic thinking which could lead to thoughts of insurrection. Le Jau recounted:

[Although] the best Scholar of all the Negroes in my Parish [...] his Learning was like to Create some Confusion among all the Negroes in the Country; he had a Book wherein he read some description of the several judgments that Chastise Men because of their Sins in these latter days, that description made an impression upon his Spirit, and he told his Master abruptly that there wou’d be dismal time and the Moon wou’d be turned into Blood, and there wou’d be dearth of Darkness and went away. (28) <sup>21</sup>

Le Jau worried that the slave’s behavior (confronting his master) and verbalizing such apocalyptic ideas could jeopardize the master/slave hierarchy and could possibly lead to slave rebellion. Le Jau concluded this anecdote, saying “some Negroe overheard a part, and it was publickly blazed abroad that an Angel came and spake to the Man, he had seen a hand that gave him a Book, he had heard Voices, seen fires &c.” (28).

For Le Jau, the lessons here are manifold. Millennial thought, whether gleaned from scripture or otherwise, was attractive to slaves because it emphasized divine retribution for sins committed by slave owners and overseers. Such thinking also gave credence to the idea that forced bondage and the horrors associated with it would be reconciled by God or, possibly, by those under its lash. In short, for slaves, millennial thinking helped alleviate the horrors of the present by strengthening the promise of reparations in the future. La Jau’s observation of his slave’s adaptation of scripture also



highlighted the permeable networks of communication on plantations and the ways acts and/or utterances, once witnessed, could quickly be spread, misconstrued and, in this case, mythologized. Tales of one man receiving supernatural attention could easily catapult him to the position of leader and prophet, roles nineteenth-century slave Nat Turner assumed with catastrophic results for white slave owners and their families.<sup>22</sup>

A final lesson for Le Jau was the recognition that if one is to teach and encourage slaves to read, it should be undertaken only with the permission of the slave's master, an argument reiterated with force by South Carolina officials after the Stono Rebellion. Unchecked education implicitly encouraged the individual and group interpretation of ideas. Such behaviors would inevitably bring forth the understanding by slaves that their enslavement is antithetical to Christ's teachings and, thus, their master/oppressor is an enemy of Christ. Le Jau's slave converts, while certainly notable, were nonetheless a rarity in the colonial south.

The SPG's work with African slaves and Native peoples in the colonial American Low Country met with limited success. Frey and Wood observe that the SPG's "efforts to Christianize enslaved Africans did not take root because their version of Christianity found no confirmation in the reality of daily life in the [slave] quarters." In addition, "[t]here were, to begin with, important institutional barriers, not the least of which was planter opposition to the proselytization of their slaves" (80). The latter caveat of Frey and Woods' argument is evident in Le Jau's admission: "I have thought most convenient not to urge too far that Indians and Negroes shou'd be indifferently admitted to learn to read, but I leave it to the discretion of their Masters who I exhort to examine well their

Inclinations” (28). Anglican ministers and planters recognized the danger associated with unregulated literacy and free interpretation. Slaves’ attraction to millennialist impulses ratcheted up already-existing anxieties over slave insurrection, and would continue to do so well into the nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> And the population ratio of whites to blacks only further reminded white slave owners of their increasing minority.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the earliest religious/educational missions attending to African slaves and Native peoples had unintended consequences, as slaves, for example, developed their own interpretations of scripture.<sup>25</sup> While the SPG’s success rate with slave-Christian conversions was fairly dismal, these Anglican ministers did introduce to slaves the imaginative and practical power of print. The association of print and an imagined religious community is evident in Bryan’s published letter. Bryan’s apocalyptic warning to Charleston and its surrounding area recalls not only the recent fire, but also the Stono Rebellion which occurred only a short time earlier in 1739.

Bryan’s warning distilled the anxieties felt by many white South Carolinians that their perpetuation of and complacency with regard to African slavery, as it then existed, would bring about God’s wrath. Such is the imagined religious community Bryan is admonishing in print. As Bryan notes, the slaves’ insurrection is directly associated with a pestilence that is affecting both livestock and people. All are signs from God that the natural order of the land is out of balance, and that reparations are in order for health and peace to return to South Carolina. Like Whitefield’s *Letter to the Inhabitants*, Bryan is not arguing for the abolition of slavery. The institution of slavery is not the problem, argued Whitefield and Bryan, but rather the poor conditions under which slaves live and

labor.<sup>26</sup> Many slaves were mistreated by their overseers and remained ignorant of Christianity. Bryan believed that, together, these factors were destabilizing the harmony in which the Low Country should exist. Bryan's method of achieving a common community of readers sees a religious awakening as necessary for the overall well-being of both whites and slaves. But this very impulse to enter print culture is, however, an informed response to Whitefield's earlier *Letter*.

Bryan's anticipation of a rebellion-sensitive readership was in response to Whitefield's *Letter to the Inhabitants*, published the year before. Allan Gallay writes in *The Formation of the Planter Elite* that "Hugh Bryan composed [the] letter for publication in the *South Carolina Gazette* in which he blamed the miseries of the colony upon the sins of the populace and an unregenerate clergy. His model was George Whitefield's letter of the previous April" (42). Hugh delivered the letter to his brother Jonathan with the intent that he would pass it along to the *Gazette*. Instead, Jonathan held onto the letter. Gallay observes that "[c]riticism of the clergy had ended, at least temporarily, in October. Would it be expedient to rekindle the dispute? He waited to confer with Whitefield [...]. One week later the letter was published in a special two-page postscript." Whitefield's affiliation with the letter lent him the charge of "editor," for which he would be liable (43). Bryan and Whitefield were brought up on charges because the letter was seen as "libeling the king." However, Gallay concludes, "[n]othing came of these arrests, and evangelicals continued to rail for the reform of society" (43). For the time being, Whitefield and Hugh Bryan were able to return to their evangelizing, albeit with greater circumspection.

Whitefield's and Bryan's letters helped incite intercolonial and regional demand for revivalist news. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Lisa Smith reports that in 1740 and 1741, the *South Carolina Gazette* printed more religious items than did any other newspaper in the colonies except the *New England Weekly Journal*. This is not surprising, as Whitefield's orphanage and shifting reputation in the colonies were frequent channels of dialogue in the *Gazette*. The American reading public was clearly fascinated with the debate being incited by Whitefield and other evangelicals. Smith concludes,

[a] somewhat unique characteristic of the *South-Carolina Gazette's* coverage of the Awakening is that even local controversies were intercolonial in their appeal. Certainly, the location of the *Gazette* as the only newspaper in the deep South and the paper closest to Whitefield's Savannah, Georgia, orphanage helped ensure this interest. Items printed in the *Gazette* were reprinted fifty-one times by other papers, making it the fourth most reprinted paper in the colonies. (77)

Smith contends that "no colonial newspaper reprinted" the Bryan letter outside of the *South-Carolina Gazette*, thus keeping his discourses regionally bound. But a public eager for any news on Whitefield, especially that of a controversial nature, was provided reprinted accounts of his arrest for editing and support of Bryan's letter (78). What is important to note here is that "[n]o other region in the colonies experienced such lengthy paper wars [regarding shifting opinions on evangelicalism] with so many different contributors" as did South Carolina during the early 1740s (Smith 80). Whitefield's and Bryan's letters were part of a campaign designed to temper the mistreatment of slaves in the south and to encourage masters to provide slaves with Christian morality. Beginning in the south, Hugh Bryan and Whitefield ultimately contributed to a generation of

intercolonial and transatlantic print culture, animated by evangelical beliefs decades before American independence.<sup>27</sup> But more important to this chapter, their contributions to religious print culture ultimately made it possible for blacks to intervene in a largely white dominated transatlantic print sphere.

Although American slaves' earliest participation in early evangelical print culture was filtered through a white writer, it nonetheless forms the crucial prehistory to individual black authorship. Like James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, southern slaves too embraced the spiritual egalitarianism of Calvinist Protestantism as a means of lessening the strain of social marginalization and, in doing so, sought out and adapted the Christian virtues of reciprocal love and personal responsibility to Christ— notions that, for many, complemented existing African beliefs. Slaves' adaptation of evangelical beliefs fostered their own unique plantation communities and ultimately drew the attention of Whitefield—by doing so, they thus entered into the transatlantic religious print culture. But it was their embrace and community-based advocacy for literacy that helped situate them in print discourse as readers and literary black Atlantic participants and which ultimately undercut the restraints on black literary dictated by the 1740 South Carolina Slave Code.

The First Great Awakening was a cultural phenomenon that provided blacks with the opportunity to challenge the racist logics of Enlightenment qualifications for humanity. Bryan's slaves resisted legal edicts forbidding them to congregate and worship in public; they publicly and explicitly demonstrated their humanity under the guise of religious worship. By utilizing the cultural norms of vibrant and emotional worship

introduced by Whitefield and his disciples, these slaves adapted the recognizable behaviors of the Great Awakening to signal their humanity for all to see. This act of civil disobedience ultimately authored their evangelical participation for all to read throughout the transatlantic religious community. In short, these slaves adapted the behavioral codes of the Great Awakening as a way of entering into a culture of print organized by Enlightenment principles of personal agency determined by writing. This act creates a crucial prehistory for the literary Black Atlantic. Later eighteenth-century writers such as Phillis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano combat these same challenges; however, they accomplish this by strategically shaping their authorial personas to meet the surface assumptions of white readers. Wheatley and Equiano also subvert Enlightenment protocols for human agency, by writing themselves into existence and addressing the key political issues of their day.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Rasmussen, “‘Attended with Great Inconveniences’: Slave Literacy and the 1740 South Carolina Negro Act.” *PMLA* 125.1 (2010): 201-203.

<sup>2</sup> Gallay, 22-23; Lambert, “‘I Saw the Book Talk’” 186-88.

<sup>3</sup> For more on Whitefield and Franklin’s professional relationship, see Peter Charles Hoffer’s *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Printed Word* and Lambert, “Subscribing for Profits and Piety: The Friendship of Benjamin Franklin and George Whitefield.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*. 50. 3 (1993): 529-554.

<sup>4</sup> Cohen and Stein clarify their use of “early” African American literature as follows: “‘Early,’ in the present usage, refers to African American print culture before the Harlem Renaissance. This aesthetic movement—along with an attendant constellation of developments in American culture, critical practices, and the literary marketplace—established an undeniable place for African American writing in the United States. But it did so in part by crystallizing a set of concepts, including ‘author,’ ‘literature,’ and even ‘African American.’ These categories subsequently helped carve out claims for African American literature in the canon (including those made by post-1960s critics); but, conversely, their fixity seems to have hampered scholars’ abilities to understand the terrain of African American print during a period before these definitions gained purchase” (4-5).

<sup>5</sup> Carretta, “The Emergence of an African American Literary Canon, 1760-1820.” *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*. Eds. Maryemma Graham and Jerry

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W. Ward Jr. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.52-65; Bannet, *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading, 1720-1810*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. 139-57.

<sup>6</sup> Bryan, "A Letter From the Negro Baptist Church in Savannah, Addressed to the Reverend Doctor Rippon." *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. Ed. Milton C. Sernett. 49-50.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, 126-27. John W. Davis, "George Liele and Andrew Bryan, Pioneer Negro Baptist Preachers." *The Journal of Negro History*. 3. 2 (1918): 119-27.

<sup>8</sup> Davis notes that "So careful was Liele to get the confidence of the masters and overseers that had ordered a bell for his church just a mile and half out of Spanish Town in Jamaica, not particularly to give warning to the slaves but to the owners of slaves that they might know the time when their slaves should return to the plantations." In addition, church readings were "shown to members of the legislature, the magistrates and justice to secure their approval that they might give their slaves permission to become members of the congregation" (123).

<sup>9</sup> For discussion of the Great Awakening in colonial South Carolina, see Gallay's second chapter: 30-54.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, Andrew Bryan's surviving writings give little information about growing up on the Bryan plantation. Most of what survive are the now well-known accounts of Jonathan and Hugh Bryans' participation in the revivals, some of which have already been discussed in this chapter.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent analysis and history of Prince's *Christian History*, see Tim D. Hall's "Imagining a Transatlantic Awakening: *The Christian History* and the Hermeneutics of



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Revival.” *Periodical Literature in Eighteenth-Century America*. Ed. Mark L. Kamrath and Sharon M. Harris. Knoxville: The U of Tennessee P, 2005. 29-46.

<sup>12</sup> Hall, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Whitefield, 112-13; Qtd in Kidd, *The Great Awakening: A Brief History with Documents*. 112-15. Original Source: Whitefield, “To the Inhabitants...” from *Three Letters from the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield*. Philadelphia, 1740. 13-15.

<sup>14</sup> Whitefield’s stance on slavery changed dramatically by 1749. In 1749, Whitefield argued for the adoption of slave labor in Georgia with success: Georgia formally legalized slavery in 1751. That same year, Whitefield purchased several slaves to work at his Bethesda Orphanage and encouraged his patron, Selena Hastings, to make additional investments in slave labor. Hastings agreed, purchasing around 200 slaves to labor on the grounds of Bethesda.

<sup>15</sup> Kyles’ argument also considers accounts of slave resistance prior to the Stono Rebellion where, according to some records, there was no evidence of a ethno-cultural origins as a force of organization. In addition, Kyles also includes an array of runaway slave ads—both prior to and following the Stono Rebellion—that suggests there is more evidence of cultural-ethno heterogeneity taking part in acts of resistance than Afro-cultural similarities.

<sup>16</sup>For more on slave seasoning in the Caribbean, see Anthony B. Pinn’s *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion*. Minneapolis, MN : Fortress Press, 2003.

<sup>17</sup> Garden, *Mr Commissary Garden’s Six Letters*. Charleston, SC, 1740. 51-54.

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<sup>18</sup> Locating evidence of people of colors' participation in tavern culture is that much more important for the field of early American print culture or public sphere studies because, as David Conroy attests, "informal tavern gatherings came closest to incarnating representative versions of [a democratic] public, because rank was often slighted or submerged in such gatherings or absent altogether." On this discussion, Conroy concludes: "Thus the expansion of the printed political discourse and the emergence of a critical reading public paradoxically rendered the oral culture of taverns even more important" (177). Up until this point, people of color in the American colonies are mostly if not entirely absent from the critical discussions emerging out of Jurgen Habermas's widely influential *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. 1962. Trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1991; and Michael Warner's more recent study of the American colonies, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1990. To include people of color in Warner's understanding of early American writing subverts any argument that early American print culture was entirely bound to white hegemony.

<sup>19</sup> In his article "Sufferers in the Charleston Fire of 1740," Kenneth Scott notes that the "number of houses burned was estimated at more than 300, besides storehouse, stables, and several wharfs." "Damage to merchandise alone," observes Scott, "was above £200,000 sterling," with a "total loss" in the upwards of "£250,000" (203).

<sup>20</sup> *South-Carolina Gazette*, January 1, 1741.

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<sup>21</sup> Francis Le Jau “Letter. February 1, 1710.” “Slave Conversion on the Carolina Frontier.” *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*. Ed. Milton C. Sernett. 25-33.

<sup>22</sup> On August 22, 1831, Nat Turner led a slave rebellion against slave owners and other white inhabitants in Hampton County, Virginia. Turner’s rebellion is, perhaps, one of the most well-known in American history. For an authoritative historical overview of Turner’s rebellion, see Kenneth S. Greenberg, “Introduction: *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, Text and Context.” *The Confessions of Nat Turner and Related Documents*. Ed. Kenneth S. Greenberg. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 1996. 1-35.

<sup>23</sup> The legality of slave literacy and writing education varied throughout the eighteenth century. South Carolina’s 1740 Slave Code, for example, restricted both reading and writing. Lawmakers saw both as tools of rebellion. Reading and writing was outlawed more universally in slave-holding states following the Nat Turner rebellion in 1831. In *Roll, Jordan, Role: The World That Slaves Made*, Eugene D. Genovese observes that “[d]espite periods of modest liberalization [in regards to slave literacy], the restrictions grew worse over time. Local ordinances supplemented state laws; in some places it became a crime merely to sell writing materials to slaves. The Nat Turner revolt completed the reactionary course in the Lower South and influenced the Upper South as well” (562). For more on Genovese’s discussion of specific states’ outlawing of slave education, see 561-66.

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<sup>24</sup> In regards to demographic ratios in colonial South Carolina, Milton C. Sernett contends that “the black population of South Carolina in 1715 outnumbered the white by 10,500 to 6,250” (25).

<sup>25</sup> For a fine study on native peoples’ interaction with the SPG, see Phillip Round, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880*. 1-20.

<sup>26</sup> At one point in his “Letter to the Inhabitants,” Whitefield concludes “Whether it be lawful for Christians to buy Slaves, and thereby encourage the Nations from whom they are bought, to be at perpetual War with each other, I shall not take upon me to determine” (114).

<sup>27</sup> Smith observes that while the distribution of Bryan’s letter was regionally bound, news of Whitefield’s involvement went transatlantic: “On June 9, 1741, the *New England Weekly Journal* reprinted” notices “from a London newspaper,” which kept London residents informed of Whitefield’s arrest in Charleston (78).

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SEVERITY OF SILENCE: THE AESTHETIC DIMENSIONS OF JOHN MARRANT'S *JOURNAL*

Just as it did for Hugh Bryan's slaves, the influence of the Great Awakening provided late eighteenth-century writer John Marrant with the opportunity to publicly contest institutional racism. Where the slaves adapted the behavioral norms of the Awakening as a means of authoring their emergent agency, Marrant revised the popular genre of the missionary journal as a means of asserting his own alternative Awakening discourse. Missionary writing and spiritual journals became increasingly popular during the Awakening and remained popular well into the nineteenth century. In addition, by 1757, secular aesthetic treatises on perceptions of beauty and the sublime tapped into European and colonial Americans' fascination with sensory definition. For example, the ancient theory of the sublime became popular when European thinkers, inspired by the Enlightenment privileging of human perception, needed to explain the most difficult of emotions. As I contend in this chapter, Marrant's familiarity with the religious genres made popular by the Great Awakening, inspired him to adapt the missionary journal as a document that legitimized his own Christian mission and challenged the racism he experienced from his religious benefactors, the Huntingdon Connexion. Marrant adapted the theory of sublimity made popular by Edmund Burke as both a rhetorical tool and form of anti-Enlightenment criticism. My analysis of Marrant's *Journal* further demonstrates writers of colors' savvy adaptation of the behavioral, rhetorical, and literary

expressions of the First Great Awakening as means of resisting philosophic and institutional racism.

Marrant's missionary account is prefaced with his struggles with the Methodist leadership responsible for supplying him with monetary support and supplies for his newly erected church in Nova Scotia. Sitting in London in 1791, discouraged by the imposed silence of his British ecclesiastical employers, the Huntingdon Connexion, Marrant recorded his disappointment and frustration in the preface to his *A Journal of the Rev. John Marrant*. The preface alerts readers to the thematic importance of silence in the text. Marrant writes:

[While in Nova Scotia] I felt such a desire for travelling from village to village [preaching], I soon ran out of the remainder of my money in paying ferrying, as that country has so many large rivers and lakes to cross; so that I was soon reduced so low that I was obliged to pawn my jacket off my body, and that I did four times, in order to get over to the different places, and repeatedly sending home every opportunity to the connection for some support, so that I might have been able to continue with the people, but never had any of any kind, which forced me to come to England to know the reason. With all the expense of coming, to pay myself, and when arrived, was not permitted to speak for myself, and so remained to the present, without any assistance, or even a Christian word out of them. (94-95)

Marrant's preface articulates an evolving anxiety over being excluded from the Connexion's web of material support. The above quotation compresses a sequence of hardship, transitioning from the stresses of maintaining an oft-mobile ministry in order to continue one's pastoral duties. This troubling recollection, however, is met with only silence, a silence that is deployed by the Connexion and enforced on Marrant: he is not spoken to and therefore he is denied the opportunity to speak on his own behalf. As

Marrant writes in his preface, this imposed silence ultimately compels him to brave the Atlantic to seek answers and, as he states, “[write] the true account I solemnly now give my Readers in the sight of God” (94). Thus, one purpose of Marrant’s structuring and publication of his *Journal* is an attempt to rectify the Connexion’s imposed silence.

While the act of writing into the public sphere counteracts the Connexion’s neglect of Marrant’s testimony, the anecdotal use of silences in Marrant’s *Journal* presents another purpose. The *Journal* posits several notable scenes where Marrant is rendered speechlessness, overwrought by congregants’ visceral emotional reactions. Many worshippers enjoined Marrant’s sermons with groans, wailing, fainting, and indecipherable guttural utterances. At certain points, Marrant is moved beyond words and rather than attempt to grasp for verbal signifiers, he instead opts for silence. Marrant’s stillness during these moments of communal-religious rapture is not, however, a case of arbitrary detail or, more especially, a ploy to conform to the long-held reputation of New Light clergy and worshippers as being especially melodramatic. Rather, I argue, Marrant’s silences are a physical enactment of the sublime, an aesthetic philosophy that underlies the tone and structure of the *Journal*.

Prior to publishing his *Journal*, Marrant struggled for two years, from 1785 to 1787, to maintain his itinerant ministry in Nova Scotia. In early 1787, Marrant left for Boston and once arrived, befriended Prince Hall who introduced him to the recently established black Masonic lodge. Marrant’s initiation into freemasonry led him to the appointed position of lodge chaplain. The time spent in Boston was not, however, unmarked by conflict. While Marrant appears to have been well regarded in the Masonic

community as well as among the evangelical community at large, he eventually finds himself hunted by a mob of men who claimed his worship services were keeping their wives and girlfriends away from home in the evenings. Fortunately for Marrant, he managed to escape their fatal plot and, with the support of the local Justice, pacify the suspicions and jealousies of the slighted men. Having secured both friends and enemies in Boston and still relying on local benefactors for financial support, Marrant finally decided to pursue his halted funding from the Huntingdon Connexion. On February 5, 1790, Marrant sailed for England expecting an audience with Selena Hastings, the Grand Patron of the Connexion (*Journal* 149-51). His quest for answers in London a little over a month later was unremitting. Marrant died in London on 15 April, 1791, having never acquired a reason for his monetary and, now, personal exclusion from the Connexion.

Marrant's fatal sojourn in London was not a wasted effort, however. From March 1790 to June, he assembled his missionary notes and select sermons, fashioning a dual narrative that, on the one hand, attempted to validate his ministry and economic responsibility in Nova Scotia and Boston (Brooks, "Unfortunates" 46). On the other, the narrative posited what Joanna Brooks and John Saillant argue is a "hidden transcript" that suggests "Marrant believed himself to be a prophet called of God to deliver a message to the black Loyalists," and "positioned the community as a covenanted people or a new Israel" (*Face Zion Forward* 24). Brooks and Saillant's observation takes up Marrant's strategic use of scripture as a sub-textual rhetorical valence that repeatedly validates himself as both preacher-speaker and utopic visionary who believed the black settlers in Nova Scotia were living on the cusp of social and economic freedom as they looked to



resettle in Freetown, Sierra Leone.<sup>1</sup> This chapter, on the other hand, argues that Marrant's *Journal* is notable for more than its use of scripture as a hidden transcript. Marrant adapts the popular genres of missionary writing and the spiritual diary, both inspired by the Great Awakening. He merges these genres to create a text that validates his mission and reputation by inverting the racialized logics of sublimity. In doing so, I argue, Marrant composes the first black Atlantic treatise of aesthetics.

My thesis intersects with and expands on analyses stemming back to the origins of Black Atlantic scholarship. Early Black Atlantic scholarship is founded on the evidence that eighteenth-century writers of African descent read, mimicked, and in some cases, revised each other's literary tropes. In his foundational monograph, *The Signifying Monkey*, Henry Louis Gates Jr. argues that the "black tradition's theory of its literature" locates a history in African tricksters. Gates contends that the tricksters, Esu-Elegbara and The Signifying Monkey, are pertinent metaphors for black writers who demonstrated an awareness of one another's narrative structure, focal plot points, and religious messages (xx-xxi).<sup>2</sup> After Gates' study, scholars were alerted to a more intertextual method of interpreting and connecting early black authors. No longer were the writings of Ottobah Cugoana, John Marrant, Olaudah Equiano, and John Jea read as isolated texts composed by writers who shared little in common but their African origins and Christian faith. These writers indeed read one another and saw value in revising each other's literary tropes. Five years after Gates' landmark study, Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* broadened our theoretical understanding of these early writers. Gilroy's theory of the "politics of transfiguration" contends that there was, by the late eighteenth century, an

“emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance *and* between the group and its erstwhile oppressors” (emphasis original 37). Gilroy’s widely influential thesis further grounded scholarly enquiry as a demand for reading, in this case, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century black writers, as shapers of a “counterculture that defiantly reconstructs its own critical, intellectual, and moral genealogy” (37-38).

Several important studies have followed Gates’ and Gilroy’s invaluable contribution to Black Atlantic literary scholarship, but few have looked to eighteenth-century aesthetic treatises as signified sources in black Atlantic texts. Perhaps the most notable exceptions are Frank Shuffelton’s pioneering article on Phillis Wheatley, “Phillis Wheatley, the Aesthetic, and the Form of Life” and, more recently, John C. Shields’s *Phillis Wheatley’s Poetics of Liberations: Backgrounds and Contexts* and its sequel, *Phillis Wheatley and the Romantics*. These studies provide careful analyses of Wheatley and her adaption of popular aesthetic philosophies of the period. But Shuffelton’s call to arms, as it were, is particularly arresting: “To read early American literature only as an ideological performance underestimates its full power as an imaginative, imagined form of life that arises out of and stands against the daily experience of its creators and audience” (75). For Shuffelton and Shields, the “imagined form of life” that inspired Wheatley and provided material for her versatile poetics came mostly from British aesthetic treatises. By focusing on the influence of aesthetic treatises in Wheatley’s poetics, Shuffelton and Shields expand Gates’ and Gilroy’s contributions. Eighteenth-century aesthetic writings are also ideas that are adapted and re-deployed by black Atlantic writers.

I propose that John Marrant's understudied *Journal*, too, be understood as an imagined form of life, as a narrative that challenges the racialized contexts of Edmund Burke's theory of sublimity. Marrant adapts Burke's notions of the sublimity by reconfiguring Burke's understanding of pain, suffering, and speechlessness. In doing so, Marrant asserts a persuasive means of demanding credibility as an effective itinerant preacher and highlights the plight of displaced loyalist blacks and the Mi'kmaq peoples of Nova Scotia.<sup>3</sup>

### **John Marrant's *Journal***

By the time of the *Journal*'s publication in June 1790, Marrant already possessed an atypical literary career for a man of color. His *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings* had gone through four editions since its 1785 publication in London, with the fourth edition showing Marrant exercising revisionary license over the printed content.<sup>4</sup> The *Narrative* originated from Marrant's ordination speech at Bath, London, on 15 May 1785. The speech was transcribed by Huntingdon clergyman William Aldridge, who, in the *Narrative*'s preface, admits to mediating Marrant's authorial voice: "I have always preserved Mr. Marrant's ideas, tho' I could not his language" (49). Details of his ordination speech were also the subject of a printed poem, *The Negro Convert*, by another Huntingdon clergyman, Samuel Whitchurch. Rather than be another amanuensis for Marrant's conversion account, Whitchurch's poem shows no evidence of Marrant's participation beyond providing initial inspiration.

Whitchurch's poem offers little concern for shaping Marrant's public, evangelical persona. Instead, the poem defaults to the racist theological premise that blackness and

sin share a direct correlation, thus underscoring the normativity of Christian whiteness. According to Karen Weyler, “Whitchurch consistently marks race only in the case of blacks or Indians [...] Hence, what emerges from *The Negro Convert* is a sense that whiteness is normative” (100). While Aldridge’s shaping of the first edition of the *Narrative* does not make such explicit connections, it does omit key, racially charged scenes, such as evidence of Native peoples’ resentment toward white settler land theft and, more dramatically, a record of slaves’ violent whippings at the Jenkins plantation outside of Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>5</sup> These omissions are reinstated by Marrant in the fourth edition of his *Narrative*.<sup>6</sup> In the midst of these publications, however, is the remarkable fact that Marrant, a black North American man, had variations of his adventures and religiosity registered in transatlantic print culture as a means of qualifying his persona as a viable evangelical leader.<sup>7</sup>

However, when it came to taking charge of his public image via his *Journal*, especially following accusations of financial mishandlings and an ineffectual itinerancy, Marrant needed to reach a public readership in the most effective way possible.<sup>8</sup> He accomplished this with a two-part process of adaption. First, Marrant merged two well-known genres developed out of the First Great Awakening: the devotional diary and the missionary journal. Where Aldridge’s decision to cobble together the popular genres of the captivity narrative and spiritual conversion in Marrant’s *Narrative* seem to pander to popular reading tastes, Marrant’s joining of the devotional diary and missionary journal for his *Journal* illustrates a rhetorical decision of a different sort.<sup>9</sup> By crafting a narrative that draws from both genres of writing, each with its own motifs of personal hardship and

spiritual struggles, and in the most hopeful examples, spiritual restoration, Marrant uses plotting conventions that would have been familiar to many British and North American clergy and laity. In other words, Marrant revised the genre of missionary writing popularized by Edwards's and Whitefield's publications. He adapted the missionary journal to improve his personal reputation, legitimize the spiritual suffering of his black, white, and Mi'kmaq congregants in Nova Scotia, and combat the racist neglect of his employers.

Second, Marrant's adapted rhetorical strategy utilized the inherently racialized theory of sublimity as a means of dramatically affecting his audience. Marrant presents three scenes in his *Journal* where he is rendered speechless, performing in a sublime register. He is overcome with emotion, transcended beyond words by the power of selected scripture and the emotionalism of his congregants. These scenes intimately link the spiritual majesty felt by his auditors with distant readers. Marrant's use of sublime silences recall the dramatic performances of other New Light sermons; however, and most important to my argument, these silences also evoke popular aesthetic theories, most notably the writings of British political and aesthetic theorist Edmund Burke. Burke's theory of the sublime most notably locates sublimity in terror, which he argues is a reaction caused by a threat to one's basic sense of personal security. Terror, Burke contends, can be generated by any means of perceived fear, including what he argues is a universal fear of blackness (*Enquiry* 175-77). Blackness may come in the form of the darkest night, an unlit cave, or even a person of color. For Burke, the speechless horror elicited by seeing a black person for the first time is entirely self-contained: that is, the

terror felt by the white observer is not associated with any specific reference point buried in one's memory (173). Marrant's use of Burkean sublimity challenges the larger ideological racism of aesthetic theory as well as the prejudicial neglect of the Huntingdon Connexion, thus taking the form of a critical aesthetic treatise. Marrant's adapted rhetorical strategy therefore qualifies the *Journal* as the first aesthetic treatise of the Black Atlantic.

### **Situating Marrant's *Journal*: Missionary Writing and the Distribution of Aesthetic Treatises**

At first glance, John Marrant's *Journal* contains many of the hallmarks of other missionary journals of the period: its narrative blends diary-like confession with a day-to-day structure of inter-personal and material transactions. Devotional diaries, personal conversions narratives, and missionary journals were well-known genres in the transatlantic world by the late eighteenth century. American and British readers during the early 1790s, when Marrant published his *Journal*, would have had some sense of the importance of diary and missionary journal writing, as it was one of the most common literary forms of public expression.<sup>10</sup> Kevin J. Berland observes that since the late seventeenth century, diaries were published if composed by "someone of historical significance or prominence, or when the religious character of the diarist could have an uplifting effect on the reader." These texts were also "heavily edited," as editors and publishers had the authority to add introductions, make abridgments, annotate the diarist's ideas, and generally tamper with the original composition of the text (374).

Nonetheless, the diary occupied a dimension of manufactured authenticity, a depiction of crafted self-exposure.

However, the diary was not entirely relegated to the paradoxical act of publicly private writing. Kevin J. Berland observes that by 1640, “the term ‘diary’ was identified with almanacs.” By the mid-eighteenth century, the association between diary and almanac was more concrete and widespread: of the five hundred titles in the eighteenth century containing the title “Diary,” “all but two were almanacs.” Berland contends that for eighteenth-century readers, the role of the diary-almanac was transformative because it “provided...an accessible template for thinking of the present and future in discrete temporal units” (373). These increasingly ubiquitous texts influenced previously uninformed populations by providing for them what was once mostly relegated to farmers: a cyclical, seasonal methodology of compartmentalizing day to day activities and a more organized system for planning future events. Thus, for colonial readers and diarists, the function of the diary was both a private space for recording daily thoughts as well as an organizational model for sectioning time and activities. This textual template for temporal order lent itself to both secular and ecclesiastical purposes.

Early New England Puritan diarists used the organizational methods popular in almanacs to display their religious devotion and personal sufferings, often as reminders to keep their day-to-day priorities centered entirely on God. Catherine A. Brekus observes that for Puritan writers, the diary was a space that always sought to “heighten their awareness of God’s ‘astonishing’ grace.” Indeed, by 1641, Puritan devotional diaries had an established script which typically found the writer beginning the diary by “examining

their sinfulness” and concluded their daily entries “by praising God for his perfection” (24).<sup>11</sup> For these writers, the substance of daily entries “involved ‘weaning’ themselves from their attachment to loved ones.” In fact, ministers “often warned their congregations not to elevate fallen humanity about God. Although Christians could love friends and family,” Brekus concludes, “they were never to forget that their ultimate allegiance was to God” (24-25). We should remember, though, that devotional diary writing during the mid-late seventeenth century was an evolving process and did not occur in isolation to other genres of personal writing. Just as the diary-almanac gave way to a more stringent methodology for scripting one’s religious trials and praises, there is also the popularity of the Puritan conversion narrative to consider.

The conversion narratives of the late seventeenth century, like those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were also performative texts, fashioned according to the ideals of the dutiful, suffering Christian. Initially, like the diaries of notable or famous persons, conversion narratives were published on both sides of the Atlantic. However, as Patricia Caldwell notes, by 1669, conversion narratives were being published and used as epigraphs in John Bunyan’s writing.<sup>12</sup> In another example, Elizabeth White’s *The Experience of God’s Gracious Dealing with Mrs. Elizabeth White* (1669), perhaps one of the most famous of early conversion narratives, ascribed to what would be a more commonly known and adopted rhetorical patterns: a detailed description of the arrival to and need for salvation; then, an admission of one’s sinful nature and the forsaking of physical relationships in order to practice undistracted meditation on God’s love and salvation.<sup>13</sup> The narrative was read aloud to the congregation in order to provide a



convincing testimony of one's sainthood and therefore gain access as a full member of the congregation.<sup>14</sup> By the mid seventeenth century, the conversion narrative was one of the most popular genres read in the British Atlantic world.<sup>15</sup> Its influence, alongside the devotional diary, helped shape the rhetorical structure of the evangelical missionary journal which would see its popularity spike during the First Great Awakening, with the publication of George Whitefield's journals, beginning in 1738, and again reflected in Marrant's *Journal*.

Like diaries and conversion narratives, journals have a history of being private spaces where an individual can record his or her thoughts, but with one key difference: as opposed to diaries, devotional or secular, journals tended to be directly associated with business dealings, often containing receipts, transactional lists, itineraries, and the like.<sup>16</sup> Marrant's *Journal*, for example, incorporates both private ruminations and detailed accounts of materials purchased for and distributed to his congregants. But journal writings' association with personal economies, as Whitefield's and Marrant's *Journal* demonstrate, did not render them void of personality.

Maritime journals such as Whitefield's and Marrant's were the most dynamic texts, containing economic and/or material details of day-to-day life at sea. These texts wove in flourishes of the writer's personality, such as jokes, complaints of boredom and dissatisfaction with other crew members, and even reminisce of home. Like almanac-diaries and devotional diaries, journals too provided a "temporal superstructure" for organizing events. However, unlike most diary writing, these occurrences were often recorded after the fact (Berland 374).<sup>17</sup> The widening gap between event and inscription

allowed some journalists the time to reconsider the rhetorical dimensions of their entries, especially those writers who coveted an external readership. Early colonial journal writers such as Cotton Mather and Daniel Horsmanden, for example, displayed a savvy rhetorical hand in investing in their organization and prose a “sense of immediacy” that came from the “day-to-day journal structure” of their writing (375). Such planning generated a readership eager to catch a glimpse of the apparently authentic experiences and thoughts of travelers, theologians, and government officials, thus creating vicarious relationships between author and reader.

Eventually, the day-to-day structuring of published journals began to incorporate elements of other life writings, such as the spiritual autobiography and personal conversion narrative. Nowhere is this clearer than in George Whitefield’s published journals. By 1738, the journals of well-traveled itinerant ministers were in demand in the British Atlantic reading public due to the Great Awakening. At the time, Whitefield had the benefit of being both one of the most traveled men in British Atlantic as well as one of the most famous voices in the burgeoning Calvinist Methodist movement sweeping across Britain, Wales, Scotland, and the American colonies. Whitefield’s fame on both sides of the Atlantic was due in large part to his understanding of the power of print marketing and the assistance of an aggressive promoter, William Seward. With Seward’s help, Whitefield cornered the market on revival news, in England and the colonies. While he was away in Georgia assessing the construction of the Bethesda Orphanage, London booksellers were bidding for the rights to sell the first installment of his *Journals*. As Frank Lambert observes, during Whitefield’s absence, British readers were demanding

more copies of the *Journals* because they were “[p]riced at six pence” and “were within reach of common men and women whose purchases resulted in six editions within nine months” (“*Pedlar*” 62). Middling colonists also had access to Whitefield’s writings. Printers in Philadelphia and Boston offered a compact volume that was intended to be affordable to lower class readers (*Pedlar* 14). Interest in the Great Awakening made missionary writing popular across all classes.

In 1740, demand for even more personalized writings encouraged Whitefield to write his own spiritual autobiography. Public interest in the autobiography originated in Whitefield’s 1738 *Journal*. Whitefield’s *A Journal of a Voyage from London to Savannah* (1738) details, as the title suggests, his first voyage to America to secure the successful construction of the Bethesda Orphanage. The *Journal* moves chronologically, beginning on December 28, 1737, and concluding on May 7, 1738. Most of the entries strike a balance between warm, personalized reflection and authoritative commentary, all the while advancing with the realities of maritime travel. For Whitefield’s British Atlantic followers, this first installment offers a tantalizing glimpse inside the life of a man who, by many accounts, was larger than life.<sup>18</sup> While this first installment demonstrates a concerted effort on Whitefield’s part to invest his account with a subjectivity that is both inviting and reverential, Whitefield clearly recognized the demand for a more overt autobiographical narrative. His *A Short Account of God’s Dealings With the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (1740) fleshes out the subjective meditations in his *Journal* by providing an origins narrative that is explicitly indebted to earlier Puritan conversion narratives.

Marrant's *Journal*, on the other hand, is very much a companion to his popular *Narrative*. Marrant's *Narrative* is, among other things, a spiritual autobiography. He takes great care to detail his origins, conversion, and subsequent survival as a Christian pilgrim wandering through the colonial American wilderness. We have to speculate that few if any who read Marrant's *Journal* were unfamiliar with his *Narrative*.

By 1756, Whitefield's *Journals, Account*, and his second autobiographical installment, *A Further Account*, were collected together, revised, corrected, and published as a single text. This final collection constituted what Whitefield biographer William V. Davis calls, "an autobiography in the form of a diary" (vii).<sup>19</sup> Thus, the final edition of Whitefield's missionary journals offered readers and future itinerant journalists a new form of autobiographical religious writing which blended together earlier narrative scripts found in more differentiated genres, such as the devotional diary and the Puritan conversion narrative. The text ultimately allowed Whitefield to construct for his audience a comprehensive theme of humanity and godliness. Whitefield's 1756 publication would be the gold standard for missionary journalists well into the nineteenth century, and it offered Marrant a strategically effective genre for challenging the institutional racism of the Huntingdon Connexion.

Like George Whitefield's 1756 collected and abridged *Journals*, Marrant's *Journal* is appended by additional documents. Marrant's 1790 *Journal* consists of an emotionally fraught introduction, a missionary journal of his ministry in Nova Scotia, and two funeral sermons preached to former congregants. Taken together, the *Journal* is a testament to the quality of Marrant's character, as both an individual and a worthy man of

God. But these similarities quickly give way to a more rhetorically savvy testament of faith and positive social causality which, I argue, is best explored through the prism of Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.<sup>20</sup>

The Huntingdon Connexion's neglect of Marrant's Nova Scotia ministry and his many pleas for assistance introduce his *Journal*, as reference to this imposed silence drives his anxiety in the *Journal*'s preface (95). The mid-section of the *Journal* finds Marrant concerned with Wesleyan ministers who charge Marrant with consistently disrupting the peace of Shelburne and Birchtown with his New Light Calvinist theology of predestination, new birth conversion, and encouragement of congregational emotionalism. This theological rivalry gives way to charges of financial mishandlings at the expense of destitute worshippers who judged Marrant most capable of arguing their need for tools, blankets, and other provisions to the governor in Halifax (123). Marrant vigorously defended his actions, making certain to detail the events and culprits in his narrative (124-25, 127). As persuasive as these detailed moments are in the *Journal*, the might of Marrant's defense is best displayed in his silence.

Marrant uses Burke's association of sublimity and silence as an edict for his own speechlessness throughout the *Journal* and as rhetorical statement on the Connexion's racism. He adapts Burke's racialized aesthetic theories of the sublime as a counter narrative to challenge the silence imposed on him by Hastings' Huntingdon Connexion as well as others' more overt criticism of his Calvinist theology and financial irresponsibility. While there is no specific evidence that Marrant read Burke, the ideas

posited by Burke are evident in the *Journal*. We should not think it a great leap for Marrant to be versed in secular as well as ecclesiastical writings. He was a well-traveled, literate, maritime minister who moved in relatively educated circles in Britain prior to his sojourn in Nova Scotia. If we consider recent scholarship on Phillis Wheatley's literary and philosophical influences, we can further make the case that Marrant would have likely had access to, among other texts, philosophical treatises. In his discussion of Phillis Wheatley's probable reading, John C. Shields contends that "Wheatley, like all literate American colonists, had access to the major eighteenth-century texts produced in Great Britain and the Continent" (*Liberation* 126). Marrant, too, was influenced by the diffusion of Burkean thought in the late eighteenth century.

The first decade of the eighteenth century saw several thinkers working out theories of beauty and the sublime. Most notable were John Dennis's and Joseph Addison's critique of Longinus's *On the Sublime*. Addison revised Dennis' theory on the sublime when he argued that sublimity is only registered when the observer finds pleasure in the vastness of the divine and is able to consciously transmit the experience through language. For Dennis and Addison, most sublime moments come from the natural world. For example, witnessing a tempest out at sea becomes sublime when the enormity of the event and the divine hand guiding the scene blooms into an idea in the viewer's mind (Shaw 38). The initial terror of the tempest takes on a particular sublime beauty, which the observer consummates by verbalizing the emotion. By 1757, however, Burke found issue with the limited scope of Dennis's and Addison's theories of the sublime, especially the idea that beauty, terrific or not, was always associated with the

sublime. For Burke, sublimity is generated by self-preservation, an instinct overtly linked to the notion of self and other, white and black. White European individuation needed to define itself against a visually and culturally marked other: in Burke's case, the black female. To treat the sublime as a mere reaction to beauty, natural or man-made, risked neutralizing its capacity for social and cultural empowerment.

Addison's allegiance to the connection between beauty and sublimity created a dangerous conformity that Burke believed dismissed the superiority of European thought. Alan Singer and Allen Dunn observe that ultimately for Burke, "sublimity is based on the instinct of self-preservation," which serves to generate "respect and reverence" in social hierarchies (98-99).<sup>21</sup> In Burke's analysis, self-preservation hinges on the embrace and understanding of passions: more specifically, feelings of danger, physical and emotional pain, isolation, and death. Burke locates one such example in an inherent fear of blackness. Burke uses as an example a former blind European boy's first exposure to a black woman. Burke prefaces the anecdote, arguing that "blackness and darkness are in some degree painful by their natural operation, independent of any associations whatsoever." Moreover, blackness, unlike the darkness of a moonless night, "is a more confined idea." The blackness of an inanimate object generates "great uneasiness" in the boy; however, after seeing a "negro woman," the boy is "struck with great horror" (173). The reaction of the boy at the sight of a black female posits a clear association between the naturalization of white individuation and what Meg Armstrong calls "a stereotype of difference, a collecting pool for all that is imagined as excessive to the ideology of Burke's aesthetics" (221). Burke's anecdote showcases the creation of empowerment, a

sublime reaction stimulated by an inherent, Eurocentric fear of blackness and reconciled in an awareness of why the superiority of white autonomy might appear threatened. Thus, for Burke, sublimity pivots on self and other, self-preservation and the neutralization of difference.

Why did Marrant embrace Burke's theory of sublimity and not, say, Dennis's, Addison's, or one of the many other thinkers exploring aesthetics in the eighteenth century? Perhaps that had something to do with the expanded distribution of aesthetic treatises in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In *Liberty of the Imagination*, Edward Cahill observes that, by 1760, competing Philadelphia print merchants William Bradford and William Dunlap actively advertised the sale of several notable aesthetic treatises. For example, Bradford and Dunlap both advertised printings of Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) and the Earl of Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks of Man, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711). Meanwhile, Bradford was keeping up with demands for Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Following the lead of historians David Lundberg and Henry May, Cahill concludes that from 1777-1790 these treatises "reached between a quarter and one half of American college and circulating libraries" (27). But what exactly was the appeal of these texts? Why were colonials and early Americans, especially evangelical clergy, interested in reading treatises on beauty, sensation, perception, imagination, and the like?

Much of eighteenth-century studies on beauty and other sensory experiences are a product of Enlightenment impulses to understand the phenomena of the mind, how external stimuli are codified as a particular set of physical sensations. While today



scholars refer to the writings of Smith, Burke, and Shaftesbury as “aesthetic” theories, there was no coherent theory of aesthetics in the eighteenth century.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the term “aesthetic” lacked cultural definition in America until the early nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup> What the eighteenth century did possess was manifold “‘philosophical criticisms’ or ‘criticisms of taste,’” that related to “ideas of sensation, perception, pleasure, fancy, imagination, beauty, sublimity, the picturesque” and so on, all of which were “bound together by their central reference to the imagination” and “united in their common interest in connecting the mind with the world around it” (Cahill 3). As a cultural repository of sorts in the British Atlantic world, the American colonies (and later, states) consistently received the latest in English political and philosophical writings.<sup>24</sup> Many of the most influential writings, those of Francis Bacon and John Locke, for example, found places in undergraduate and graduate curricula. There was among the learned, as early as the 1720s, an awareness or even interest in the contemporary trends in rationalism and empiricism as forms of inquiry.<sup>25</sup> These analytic impulses ultimately merged with colonial American ecclesiastical concerns by the mid eighteenth century.

Jonathan Edwards, for example, employed the sublime for rhetorical effect in his writings. In 1746, Jonathan Edwards published *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, which sought to breakdown the efficacy of the New England Great Awakenings by differentiating between charges of worshiper theatrics and hyperbole and an authentic procurement of divine grace. Following Edwards’ *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), which scrupulously recorded the eruption of Christian conversions in Northampton, Massachusetts, Edwards and his affirmed

awakenings had been scrutinized by Old Light clergy and laymen. Some believed Edwards' accounts to be exaggerated and worse, encouraging common believers to rhapsodize their new birth in Christ independent of clerical acknowledgement and supervision. In an attempt to reconcile or at least think through such turbulence, Edwards asks in *Religious Affections*, "What is the nature of true religion? and wherein do lie the distinguishing notes of that virtue and holiness, that is acceptable in the sight of God?" (137). He proceeds to tackle these questions in what William Vaughn observes as "a proto-psychological attempt to understand the nature and evaluate the validity of religious experience" (129). Divided into three major parts with several attending subsections, Edwards' *Religious Affections* reads very much as a text arguing for theological substance through philosophical means. Rather than focusing on empirical insights, however, here Edwards takes up the language of the sublime. William Vaughn notes that "much of the concomitant period interest in the sublime" "gestures toward a displaced theology: a means of experiencing the rapture of religion in a world increasingly stripped of its mystery" (129). Edwards, on the other hand, was seeking compatibility through a discourse of affect in scripture.

In part one of *Religious Affections*, Edwards uses Peter 1:8 as a means of, among other things, explaining the power of sublime joy in Christ. Peter 1 posits that of faith alone in an invisible Christ, "ye rejoice with a joy unspeakable, and full of glory" (qtd in Edwards 138). Working off of Peter 1's statement, Edwards writes that for those Christians who "saw him spiritually, whom the world saw not," "their spiritual joys were" "unspeakable and full of glory." Yet, writes Edwards, an unspeakable joy is

“very different from worldly joys, and carnal delights.” Rather, it is “of a vastly more pure, sublime and heavenly nature, being something supernatural, and truly divine and so ineffably excellent; the sublimity, and exquisite sweetness of which, there were no words to set forth” (140). Here, Edwards’ demarcation of worldly joys and joys of a heavenly nature prefigure Edmund Burke’s 1757 treatise on the sublime. Just as he demonstrates Lockean empiricism in his “Personal Narrative,” in *Religious Affections*, Edwards synthesizes a notion of the sublime as a means of interrogating the difference between carnal and spiritual affect. Thus, one of America’s foremost evangelicals instilled in his published writings a template of spiritual and personal reflection that employed moves of empirical thought and analytics of the sublime as a means of personal, spiritual, and social investigation. Whitefield’s missionary writings and Edwards’ religious treatises were among the most notable texts directed towards a New Light readership.

### **Marrant’s Sublime Resistance**

Marrant’s *Journal* is rife with attempts at conveying the author’s pain, fear, and nearness to death. He clearly wished to convey to his detractors the pain and personal sacrifices he endured for the sake of his sacred mission in Nova Scotia. Unlike the work of Dennis, Addison, and other aesthetic theorists, Burke’s *Enquiry* is a useful guide for strengthening such a purpose. Burke’s theories would have given Marrant an efficient means for harnessing rhetorical strength out of his own suffering without the potential of slipping into shallow self-pity or sentimentalism, which would have been counterproductive to his testament of spiritual integrity. Furthermore, and perhaps most crucially, using Burke’s theory of sublimity as a means of empowering black leadership

and black communities directly challenges the sublime's ideological connection to ethnic-cultural qualifiers of superiority and inferiority. Burke's theory of sublimity and self-preservation can only be substantiated through racial difference.<sup>26</sup> Marrant inverts this formula by revising sublimity as a tool for black self-preservation under the oppression of white institutional racism.

While critics such as Sandra Gustafson productively read Marrant's reliance on suffering in his *Journal* as a Pauline rhetorical convention, there is also much to be gained by reading the *Journal* through the prism of Burke's theory of sublimity (*Eloquence* 109-110). Connecting Marrant to a popular aesthetic theory of the day serves two distinct purposes. First, it allows scholars of the Black Atlantic, eighteenth-century aesthetic theory, and historians to consider the wider effects of aesthetic treatises on eighteenth-century marginalized writers— as opposed to those Anglo writers moving in well-known literary and philosophical circles. Second, linking Marrant's *Journal* with Burke's theory of sublimity dramatically shifts the contours of the *Journal*'s already-limited scholarship.<sup>27</sup> Rather than read the *Journal* as just another evangelical missionary account born out of the tradition of Whitefield's popular 1756 *Journals* and mirroring the same script as fellow Nova Scotia itinerant, Freeborn Garrettson's 1791 *Journal*, we should instead consider yet another rhetorical valence lurking in Marrant's account.<sup>28</sup> Just as Brooks and Saillant uncovered a scriptural narrative "bursting with significance" (*Zion* 36) for black and white readers, Marrant's *Journal* makes a defiant statement for both Marrant's character as well as the spiritual integrity of his mission in Nova Scotia.

The accounts of pain and suffering in Marrant's *Journal* are devised as emotional extremes, moments that affect readers' imaginations by generating empathy and compassion only elicited in a sublime register of narrative. Marrant channels Burkean sublimity in two ways. The first is through representations of speechlessness: that is, moments in the text where the emotions of his congregation and the message preached overwhelm Marrant. These moments frame a spiritual agony where Marrant's silence is the sublime breakdown of language. The second are Marrant's accounts of physical pain and suffering. These examples are oftentimes grotesque demonstrations of self-sacrifice, events which create a sublime reaction in readers, as readers witness and meditate on the horror of the sufferer while relishing in a safe distance from such terrific events.<sup>29</sup> My discussion will focus primarily on the former, the sublimity of silence.

Marrant's depictions of speechlessness seek to elicit a sublime reaction from those experiencing physical and emotional pain. The enactment of the sublime in his audience of worshippers and readers hopes to restore Marrant's ministerial reputation and to sanctify his New Light ministry in Nova Scotia. On December 20, 1789, Marrant preached to a congregation of blacks and Mi'kmaqs in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. It was an especially tense time for Marrant; the day before, a Mr. Marchenton, in Halifax, sent a letter to the people of Shelburne alerting them that Marrant was not a Wesleyan Methodist. Unlike John Wesley and his followers, Marrant disagreed with Dutch Christian reformer Jacobus Arminius. Wesley believed in Arminius' theology of spiritual atonement through good works. Salvation was indeed attainable, argued Arminius and Wesley, if only the sinner amended his or her ways and sought out work that benefited

others.<sup>30</sup> Marrant, like other New Light believers, argued that “there was no repentance this side of the grace” (*Journal* 104), only a consistent mindfulness of God’s judgment while toiling on earth. On this December day, Marrant began by preaching from Acts 3:22-23: “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.”<sup>31</sup> This choice of scripture reminded congregants and his *Journal* readers to recognize Marrant as a prophet, especially in light of the tensions of the previous day. Marrant selected these verses from Acts to underscore both his and the community’s prophetic mission of establishing the Huntingdon Connexion’s New Light doctrine amongst the peoples of Nova Scotia.<sup>32</sup> In the evening, Marrant preached from John 5:28-29: “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Choosing these verses from John 5 emphasizes that there is no merit to the Arminian argument, no salvation through good works alone. There is only the hope that grace be granted in a new birth in Christ, that there be some chance that one’s soul is not predestined for damnation.

Marrant’s subtextual argument for ministerial authority is qualified by John’s demarcation of right and wrong, saved and damned, and sets the stage for a description of his active, sublime ministerial talents. After linking these two readings, Marrant instills a strategic, sublime climax in the form of speechlessness: “In the evening... God’s spirit

was very powerfully felt both by the preacher and hearer, and for five minutes I was so full I was not able to speak.” Marrant goes further, ironically using the written word to register the effects of the sublime severity of silence on his audience: “Here I saw the display of God’s good spirit; several sinners were carried out pricked to the heart. Here Mr. Marchenton’s letter proved fruitless” (104). Many in Marrant’s audience physically collapse, their minds wrought by the silent but rapturous resolve of their preacher; the sublime power of Marrant’s sermon, so it seems, renders believers incapacitated in their agony for divine grace.

On January 22, Marrant describes a scene that while reminiscent of the events of December 20, are notably directed at his *Journal’s* readership. After arriving at Green’s Harbor, Marrant is asked to baptize children from a local Mi’kmaq family. The service elicits a dramatic response from other Native peoples in the area wishing to be baptized, many coming from miles away to hear the preacher (108-09). Marrant sets up the scene:

At half after ten o’clock, a large body of people came from Ragged Island, and round about, so that the place could not contain them, and many of them were obliged to stay out of doors; and my reader will be pleased to take notice, that the snow was four feet deep, and in some places five feet deep.(109)

Marrant’s specificity with regard to the snow fall suggests the worshippers’ physical sacrifice, in terms of the strain of travel to reach the meeting and, of course, the spiritual desperation needed to stand outside in several feet of snow while others worship in relative comfort. Marrant arranges the scene as a metaphor for a suffering people clamoring for spiritual sustenance, but consigned to stand outside, isolated from community and salvation. This scene is especially important for Marrant, as this is the

first instance where the reader is directly addressed outside the *Journal's* introduction (94-95). For Marrant, the reader should be “pleased” to see the desire for the Baptismal sacrament met with true physical discomfort. This pleasure, however, carries greater significance than what could be perceived as a demonstration of Native peoples’ willingness to suffer for Christian inclusion.

Again, we must consider Marrant’s choice of scripture for the occasion as an appropriate lens through which to read his second description of sublime silence. For this gathering, Marrant preaches from Matthew 28: 19-20.<sup>33</sup> Matthew 28 relates Christ’s directive of Christian propagation to his disciples, that they must go forth and “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” On one register, Marrant selection of scripture maintains the messianic persona he is actively cultivating; on another, Marrant is underscoring their participation in a spiritual and communal solidarity. John Saillant observes that collectively, Marrant’s Nova Scotia sermons sought a “restoration of a pure and covenanted black community to their Zion” which was an “element of God’s providential design.” Moreover, this covenant of faith was a “benevolent overruling of the sins of the slave traders and slaveholders” (“Tears” 9).<sup>34</sup> While Saillant’s observation is a cogent one, it has its limitations. Marrant’s spiritual covenant is with *all* marginalized peoples, especially the Native tribes struggling for physical and spiritual sustenance. This baptismal scene is entirely inclusive, to the point where Marrant wishes to highlight for his readers his worshippers’ place in his Zionist covenant of grace:



My soul was filled with the glorious power and love of God; I could perceive solemnity in the faces of all the people within the audience of my voice; so that the convincing power of God was manifested; instead of nine, the number of the family, there were added to it twelve, which made twenty one...then did I lift up my voice aloud to the Lord for the baptizing Spirit to fall upon us; and here I would have my readers take notice, that, for about five minutes I was not able to speak being overpowered with the love of God. (109)

Where Marrant's previous scene of speechlessness is devised as a sublime demonstration of personal and theological primacy in the face of Arminian competition, here Marrant renders his silence as a sublime measure of sanctification and compassion.

Marrant's choice of scriptures from this baptism alludes to the sanctity of the event as well as to the compassion he feels for their physical and spiritual depravity. Following Marrant's five minutes of sublime silence, many worshipers collapsed to the ground, leaving only five still kneeling. After baptizing those kneeling, Marrant baptizes those writhing on the ground, crying out "'Lord have mercy upon us'" (109). Marrant again asks the reader "to note" as an unnamed twelve year old girl comes forth, following the moments of silence and agony. She is worried that she cannot "fulfill the charge that was then given her" regarding Christ's call for all to minister his message. Marrant responds: "I asked her if she was not afraid her soul would be lost to all eternity?" The child "burst out in tears" as Marrant "left her, finding that she was not able to express her feelings" (109). Marrant held another service later that evening, preaching from John 14:1-2. John 14's message is one of faith and hope: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Thus, the message here is those struggling with their faith on earth should always be mindful that they need to keep

their trust in the Father and Son, for by their grace will they find everlasting peace in the celestial plain.

The girl's crisis of faith is central to the baptismal scene. Only after Marrant renders much of his audience incapacitated in the overwhelming agony for divine grace, do we see the most apt representative come forward and voice her individualized concern. Where the Mary Scott anecdote from Marrant's *Narrative* serves as an especially pathetic demonstration of adult conversion via the suffering of a small child, the *Journal's* child's conversion is of a greater significance. In the *Narrative*, Mary Scott is a seven year old child whom Marrant explains, displayed a "remarkable conversion" (70). Her conversion, however, was not necessarily one of a new birth in Christ, but rather from carefree child to fatalistic believer. Scott desired to perish in her young age so she could "sing Hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb for ever and ever" rather than live a full life in Christ. The new birth conversion, Marrant suggests, comes from Scott's mother (72). Oddly, Marrant foregoes any detail of the mother's conversion and instead opts to move the narrative to his maritime service and deliverance from death. As opposed to the Mi'kmaq girl's conversion in the *Journal*, the conversion of Mary Scott and her mother is strangely static and of little consequence to the integrity of Marrant's narrative. In the *Journal*, however, the girl's incapacity for speech is of note to readers because her silence is meant to be resolved. For example: "On the 23d, the girl I have already mentioned, rose up in the time of preaching, crying out, and declaring to the congregation—that her sorrow and sighing had fled away, and she had received that peace from God, which the tongue could not express" (110). Her public recuperation

from the oppressive silence of spiritual doubt attests to the power of Marrant's spiritual leadership, including his choice of scriptures. Rather than use the anecdote of a child as an extreme means of achieving adult conversion, as Marrant does in his *Narrative*, this *Journal* scene remains focused on the child. The child's articulate conversion is a metaphorical synthesis of Matthew 28: 19-20 and John 14: 1-2. She is indeed a new disciple in Christ and of the generation of Nova Scotians who will "Face Zion Forward" as her faith in Christ and God stands intact (Marrant, *Sermon* 162). Marrant shapes the anecdote of the girl as a parable of youthful conversion in the mixed culture of the Canadian Atlantic.

Marrant's anecdote of the young child's conversion in the *Journal* is a correlative to the rhetorical use of scripture. The parallel narrative derived from Marrant's choice of scripture is rendered in this child's conversion. But this anecdote is also bound to and a product of Marrant's silence. As Marrant makes clear in this second scene of speechlessness, the reader must acknowledge the generative power of his ministry. His first act of sublime silence is in response to Arminian opposition, a significant point of contention throughout Marrant's *Journal*. In the second scene where Marrant is struck speechless, the goal is to baptize a disparate group of Mi'kmaq peoples, as well as direct them toward being perpetuators of the gospel. Marrant's selection of scripture in both scenes contextualizes and reinforces his goals.

However, the scenes' rhetorical power and spiritual gravitas are contingent on the enactment of the sublime. For Marrant, these acts of silence astonish his listeners, most notably the child. She soon recognizes the need to preserve her spiritual integrity and

pronounces her conversion. This enactment of public self-preservation, a response to physical and emotional pain, is made possible by her engagement with the sublime. The girl's experience is induced by Marrant's powerful use of sublimity. Here, I recall Burke's theory of power and the sublime: "I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power. And this branch rises as naturally...from terror, the common stock of every thing that is sublime" (107). "Power," concludes Burke, "derives all its sublimity from the terror with which it is generally accompanied" (108), and "wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime" (109). For Burke, power does not carry a pejorative dimension; rather, power is an essential base ingredient of the sublime. And for Burke, the sublime is "the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (86).

The sublimity of Marrant's silences is registered as a significant act, a performance designed to capture the attention of auditors and readers. In the first scene, he is both wrestling control from Arminian competitors as well as reminding his worshippers that the salvation of their souls is precarious at best. His strategy is to instill terror of eternal damnation in the minds of his audience as an antidote to Wesley's Arminian theology. Yet Marrant is not excluding himself from the message; he too is part of this community of Calvinist believers. Therefore, his silence is both participatory and private: "God's spirit was very powerfully felt both by the preacher and hearer, and for five minutes I was so full I was not able to speak" (*Journal* 104). Marrant's *Journal* is fraught with accounts of his own personal terror, of moments of physical and emotional pain, most created by the necessity to stay ahead of the Arminian ministers. His life and

livelihood depend on maintaining his ministry and not being intimidated or undermined by Wesleyan factions. He best demonstrates his theological primacy by evoking the act of speechlessness, a physical manifestation of “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (Burke 86). Such a theatrical delivery is perhaps the most persuasive form of truthfulness (Gustafson 277). For auditors, the absence of sound from Marrant, the room’s focal point, creates an unsettling suspension of emotional and auditory continuity. Listeners are forcefully disjointed from the merging room-sounds of spiritual ecstasy and agony, bereft of the communal solidarity such sounds creates. Thus suspended from their group participation, worshippers and readers are affected by Marrant’s sublimity of silence.

However, the need to combat his competition and stimulate the spiritual terror of his audience is only one dimension of his use of silence. Marrant also uses speechlessness in his prepared *Journal* to elicit a response from readers. As the second scene of silence demonstrates, there is a rhetorical function to ratcheting up the outcomes of his stillness. Marrant’s second anecdote of silence directly involves the reader. The reader is called forth to observe, first, Marrant’s silence, then the conversion of the little girl. The other dimension of the severity of silence is a demonstration of the author’s conviction and effectiveness as a leader of the faith. Here, Burke’s association of self-preservation/sublimity is most pertinent. Marrant’s speechlessness is a sublime act, a delivery that actively engages his readers and, in effect, surpasses the physical and temporal remove of the reading act. If we are following Brooks and Saillant’s argument that Marrant “believed himself to be a prophet called of God to deliver a message to the

black Loyalists,” which “positioned the community as a covenanted people or a new Israel” (*Zion* 24), then we must also read his silences as a textual demonstration of spiritual authority through transcendence. Narrating silence illustrates a missionary and personal directive for both attendees of Marrant’s ministry and those in the Atlantic world reading his account: prick hearts and minds through sublimity, shifting doubters to believers and critics to supporters.

The third and final scene of sublime speechlessness focuses specifically on his readers. This final sequence firmly establishes his use of speechlessness as a rhetorical move designed to engage readers. Marrant writes:

Here we see the amazing and boundless love of God, in delivering his people from the jaws of death. O where shall we find language sufficient to celebrate his praises? Whilst our pilgrimage is here below, may we not join with Paul, and say, ‘O the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God.’ I assure thee, Reader, I am at a loss for words; but this I know, experience goes beyond expression. (147)

Like the earlier scenes, here too Marrant codes his discourse with scripture. In this case, he draws from Romans 11:33 to situate his message: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out.” Throughout Romans 11, Paul emphasizes an unwavering faith in God, for one should never presume to discount God’s plan, regardless of the pain one may experience. Verses 34 and 35 add additional context to Marrant’s selected verse: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (*Holy Bible, Authorized or King James Version* Romans 11:34-35). Paul’s

message of unwavering trust and faith in God is connected to Marrant's overall narrative, a point that is addressed specifically to readers.

Marrant's final scene of speechlessness brings the sequence of silences to fruition: Marrant generates a succession of scenes that draw from the tensions of theological conflict, social and physical isolation, and spiritual terror, which he situates in narrative time and, in the second and final scenes, as directives to his readers.<sup>35</sup> With this final scene, the reader is finally made an explicit recipient of Marrant's experiential theology. The theology derived from his missionary experiences is directed specifically to an imagined readership. The theological weight of this scene is, as Marrant concludes, grounded in the idea that "experience goes beyond expression" (147). The idea with each sequence is to devise a sublime demonstration of ministerial effectiveness and to highlight the sacredness of worship among the ethnically mixed Nova Scotia settlers. Marrant expertly utilizes his and his congregants' experiences as support for his theologically-grounded counter narrative which argues for his ministerial authority and the sanctity of his Nova Scotia mission.

Marrant employs his use of sublime silence as a way of generating a counter narrative to combat his critics, sanctify his spiritual mission in Nova Scotia, and rhetorically challenge the racism of Burke's theory of sublimity. As I have noted, Marrant's enactment of silence is generative: there is a notable progression from his first act of speechlessness to the third and final scene. In each scene, Marrant's silence is an enactment of Burkean Astonishment, a moment where "the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object

which employs it.” This process creates “the effect of the sublime in its highest degree,” as it “anticipates our reasonings” and “hurries us on by an irresistible force” (Burke 101). He uses his and his audiences’ pain and terror associated with eternal damnation as a form of self-preservation. This rhetorical move inverts Burke’s racialized logic of sublimity which is contingent on blackness as a qualifier of white self-preservation. Burke argues that emotions have two possible effects on the mind, one of which is self-preservation.<sup>36</sup> Emotions of pain and terror, generated by, among other things, the sight of animate blackness “fill the mind with strong emotions of horror” and facilitate a base response that urges “preservation of the individual,” a reaction that “is a source of the sublime” (86).

In accessing the sublime, worshippers and readers are especially attuned to any individual who inundates their minds with emotions of horror, who exacerbates pre-existing feelings of pain and terror. Marrant’s *Journal* is indeed wrought with scenes of terror and pain. Evidence of these emotions serves a purpose beyond a demonstration of pious suffering or, as Joseph Fichtelberg has recently asserted, a medium of “risk culture” that “allowed early Americans to tell the story of modernity to themselves” (3). In the case of Marrant, Fichtelberg contends that the *Journal* uses “terror of Calvinist sin to figure both [his] frailty and [his] authority,” a response to the harsh conditions of preaching and surviving in Canada (10).

I approach Marrant’s use of pain and suffering from a different angle. I see his trilogy of silence as an especially savvy rhetorical practice, one that adapts Burke’s then well-known theory of sublimity for his own purposes. Moments of speechlessness in the



narrative elevate the fervor of the audience to something more transcendental for the reader, effectively bridging experience worshippers in the narrative with the experience of the reader. The reader is carefully alerted to the precarious state of the narrator and participants' physical and spiritual well-being. The generative movement of each scene distills the effectiveness and sanctity of Marrant's mission, with the third and final act of silence directed specifically at the reader. Rather than assume the reader is a passive observer of his missionary work, Marrant instead asks that we pay close attention to his theological experiences, to be a material witnesses to his ministry. The use of speechlessness and Burke's theory of sublimity allowed Marrant to convert the stress, pain, and suffering of his ministry into a powerful, convincing account of his ministerial success. This was the ultimate irony, as Marrant inverted the silence imposed on him by Hastings and the Connexion, crafting it into a source of rhetorical strength and conviction.

### **Marrant's *Journal* as the Aesthetic Treatise of the Black Atlantic**

The popularity of published missionary journals sparked by the Great Awakening of the 1730s and 40s, alongside greater opportunities for missionary work, created by the 1780s, a readership eager for tales of personal spirituality and itinerant adventure. Following the American Revolution, mid-Atlantic and New England states were energized by another wave of religious fervor. In 1784, American Methodism was formally organized as a separate religious body. Mark Noll observes that "[o]nly the excitement of attending Whitefield's early preaching can match" the effect this new Methodist Episcopal Church had on the newly independent American states (*Rise* 215).

In the wake of the formation of American Methodism, there was once again a surge in theological competition. By the early 1780s, an increase in published evangelical missionary writings reflected desires for missionary and colonial expansion.

Ecclesiastical publications such as Thomas Coke's *A Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions Among the Heathens* (1783), Moravian A.G. Spangenberg's *Instructions for Members of the Unitas Fratrum Who Minister in the Gospel Among the Heathens* (1785), and Particular Baptist minister William Carey's *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792) spoke to "increased international opportunity" and the "attractiveness of missionary service" throughout the many Christian denominations competing for followers (Noll, *Rise* 231).

Concurrently, black itinerant preachers began publishing accounts of their own missionary work. In addition to Marrant's *Narrative and Journal*, David George's *An Account of the Life of Mr. David George* (1793) and Boston King's *Memoirs of the Life of Boston King* (1798) made up a growing published contingent of spiritualist writings at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> Future black itinerants such as John Jea, George White, and Henry Alline would usher in the first decade of the nineteenth century with a collection of journals, sermons, and spiritual autobiographies that would continue to carve out a distinct place for black Christian thought in the Atlantic world.<sup>38</sup>

Marrant's *Journal* emerges as the earliest sustained missionary account by a black preacher. The *Journal* is also unique in that the text is one of the first unmediated black-authored accounts to assert what William Andrews describes as "causation and culpability to *men* for the evils *they* brought on their peers" (emphasis in the original, 47).

Earlier black authored accounts including Marrant's *Narrative*, observes Andrews, relied on a narrative model that promoted "an ideal of freedom *from* the self, not *for* the self" by insisting on the "metaphysics of presence" (emphasis in the original, 46-47). This "presence," Andrews explains, is the "indefinite design of Providence;" that is, "suffering, whether of natural (sickness and accidents) or human (deceptions, fraud, or violence)" is always derived from a divine motive and never from human culpability (47). While the speaker in Marrant's *Journal* ascribes to such metaphysics of presence, he is not defined by it, and therefore the text must be discussed as a dynamic narrative that signifies on Burke's theory of sublimity by ironically inverting it.

Recently, critics have returned to the eighteenth century in order to explore the socio-political networks created or dramatically influenced by aesthetic theories. Cindy Weinstein and Christopher Looby write that when attempting to examine eighteenth-century aesthetics—a term, as I noted earlier, held no currency at the time—we should not "attempt to prescribe a single definition." Instead, it would be more responsible to include a list of common denominators that occur in many eighteenth-century aesthetic treatises. These include, among many others, "play of the imagination," "the recognition and description of literary form," and depictions of sensuous experience in general" (4). The affect created by Marrant's adaption of Burkean sublimity meets these criteria.

Marrant posits a play of the imagination grounded in representations and conveyances of sublime silence. He adapts as his silences, Burkean theories of sublimity grounded in pain and suffering as a means of capturing the imagination and respect of readers and dislodging the Eurocentrism of sublime theory to include the black speaker.

But Marrant's *Journal* stands as an aesthetic treatise entirely outside other European treatises. The text is not arguing for inclusion but rather exclusivity: Marrant's pastorship and ministerial mission are of God's will, independent of human recognition or accolades. Marrant adapts European literary conventions as a means of speaking out against his and his followers' mistreatment at the hands of a racist Methodist church. The *Journal* is a statement of faith and public outrage: a recognition and inversion of an ideological discourse designed to reinforce the naturalization of racial hierarchies. The *Journal* is indeed a critical statement of faith and cultural presence, a proactive attempt at spurring on God's good will towards his congregants in Nova Scotia.

Let us not forget that for Marrant, God would grant his chosen ones peace and harmony. "The fundamental doctrine of his theology was that an overruling God worked a design in the universe by countering human sin with the beneficent provisions" (*Zion* 25). Marrant indeed preached that God was not just a bringer of damnation to the elected; rather, God was also benevolent in His counteracting of evil in the world. God truly cared for his believers and would see them to Zion. It was this utopic vision that ultimately inspired many black Nova Scotia settlers to sail for Sierra Leone where they believed God would bestow on them the stability and resources denied them in America and Canada.

The *Journal's* blending of the missionary journal genre and Burkean theoretics establishes it as perhaps the most dynamic and important synthesis of early black Atlantic thought. In the face of economic and personal isolation, most certainly attributed to his race, Marrant forms his own politics of transfiguration as a means of publicly

legitimizing his mission. To recall Gilroy, the “politics of transfiguration strives in pursuit of the sublime, struggling to repeat the unrepeatable, to present the unrepresentable,” pushing “towards the mimetic, dramatic, and performative” (38).

Marrant’s *Journal* is indeed a dramatic transfiguration of late eighteenth-century aesthetic theory.

The *Journal* straddles the predestination theology of New Light evangelicalism and the more secular aesthetic theories of Burkean sublimity. Marrant’s allegiance to the Huntingdon Connexion’s strict Calvinism is not contestable. He rarely denotes an event’s cause outside the will of God, and this certainly includes the spiritual and physical terror felt by he and his congregants. But he does, however, harness rhetorical strength out of such scenes of terror. As I discussed earlier, Marrant crafted a trilogy of scenes where the narrator is reduced to silence, thus creating a sublime reaction among worshippers and readers. His use of sublimity, as adapted from Burke, creates a generative sequence of examples which alert readers to the efficacy of Marrant’s mission and the physical and spiritual suffering experienced by his audience. Furthermore, by adapting Burke’s ideas, Marrant inverts the racist paradigms associated with sublimity and self-preservation. His *Journal* is, in effect, a startling composite of evangelical missionary journal and cultural criticism. Just as Burke adapted and revised the ideas of Addison, Marrant’s *Journal* demonstrates a revision of Burke’s theory of sublimity. Marrant’s *Journal* can thus be read as an aesthetic treatise, an emergent aesthetic treatise of the black Atlantic.

Eighteenth-century missionary journals borne out of the Great Awakening set the standard for Marrant’s *Journal*. Like Whitefield’s 1756 *Journals*, Marrant blends diary-

like confession with a day-to-day structure of interpersonal and material transactions. He also appends additional documents to his narrative that serves as both a thematic carryover as well as examples of pastoral output. In terms of familiar scripts, Whitefield's *Journals* commonly cite the exuberance of worshippers, detailing many occasions where believers fall to the ground, grunt, moan, and cry.<sup>39</sup> Another popular missionary journalist was Devereaux Jarratt. His 1776 journal of revivals in Virginia also illustrates the dramatic reactions of congregants, at one point describing a group of older believers who, when "were questioned concerning the state of their souls, were scarce able to make any reply but weeping and falling to their knees" (202). Believers' speechlessness in scenes of religious fervor was not rare. Jarratt's account shares a likeness to Whitefield's and others. Marrant's silence, however, connotes a very different register.

Marrant's *Journal* adapts the common script of Great Awakening missionary journals in order to extrapolate Burkean sublimity as a means of countering the prejudicial and personalized criticisms that brought his pastoral career to a standstill. In doing so, Marrant crafted the first aesthetic treatise of the literary black Atlantic. His *Journal* is a foundational text, one that exceeds the scope and rhetorical effect of his popular *Narrative*, and one which is matched in innovation only by Equiano's *Narrative*. Marrant's *Journal* is ultimately a testament to his savvy rhetorical abilities and to the continued effect the Great Awakenings had on black Atlantic consciousness. Marrant was able to expertly harness the rhetorical power of evangelical theology, graft it onto the familiar script of the evangelical missionary journal, and transmit it back to readers through the prism of popular aesthetic theory.

The *Journal's* importance as religious text, black Atlantic narrative, or, as this chapter posits, aesthetic treatise is only now being recognized. Joanna Brooks' research suggests that there is only guess work in how Marrant's *Journal* was received by readers in his own time. Marrant notes on the cover page of his *Journal* that he was one of two sellers of the text (93). The other distributor was J. Taylor, whom Brooks identifies as James Taylor, "a bookseller under the south arch of the Royal Exchange, a London center of business" ("Unfortunates" 46). Regarding Taylor's reputation as a book seller, Brooks observes that he "appears to have had an appetite for the mildly exotic, as well as a taste for the unfortunates and scoundrels." "Perhaps," Brooks ponders, "this is what attracted him to Marrant...and his tales of missionary suffering, and his need for vindication" (47). No other evidence of readers or sellers is available beyond Marrant's sales itinerary listed after the *Journal's* preface (96-97). Perhaps copies of his *Journal* made it to the United States, as there are two surviving copies currently located at the Boston Public Library and The State Library of Pennsylvania. The sale origins of these texts remain unknown, however (Brooks 48).

Therefore we are left to wonder how Marrant's readers would have interpreted his *Journal*. But for scholars today, we must recognize it as a dynamic synthesis of missionary journal and public defense, of a personal testament of spiritual and communal leadership and critical inversion of a popular racist discourse. Moreover, as early American scholars continue to examine the history and politics of aesthetics, we need to be alert to the presence of aesthetics in lesser studied texts. Marrant's *Journal*, as I have noted, is made up of multivalent influences, especially the adaption of Burkean notions of

sublimity. Recognizing the *Journal* as an aesthetic treatise further revises our understanding of the ways in which black Atlantic writers absorbed and refashioned published information. Scholars have rightly examined the influence of aesthetics in Phillis Wheatley's poetics, thus discovering aesthetic theories present in the work of one of the most well-known black Atlantic writers. My hope is to include Marrant's *Journal* in this scholarly company and to continue work that underscores the intellectual vitality and inventiveness of black Atlantic writers struggling on the economic and social margins of the transatlantic world.



## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For more on Marrant's rhetorical use of scripture, see John Saillant, "'Wipe away All Tears from Their Eyes': John Marrant's Theology in the Black Atlantic, 1785-1808." *Journal of Millennial Studies* 1.2 (1999), <http://www.mille.org/publications/journal.html> and Joanna Brooks, "John Marrant's *Journal*: Providence and Prophecy in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic." *The North Star: A Journal of African American Religious History* 3.1 (1999): 1-21.

<sup>2</sup> See Gates, 127-69

<sup>3</sup> Marrant does not specifically identify the tribal affiliation of his Native congregants in Nova Scotia. However, the Mi'kmaq tribe has maintained a significant tribal presence in eastern Nova Scotia since before the seventeenth century. In her article "John Marrant's *Journal*," Joanna Brooks identifies Marrant's Native population as Mi'kmaq (1). In addition, historian Geoffrey Plank offers a history of Mi'kmaq presence in Nova Scotia as well as a detailed study of contact with European settlers in eastern Nova Scotia beginning in the 1670s (12). See Plank, *An Unsettled Conquest: The British Campaign Against the Peoples of Acadia*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> See Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century* 70-73.

<sup>5</sup> Discussing Aldridge's editorial control, Brooks and Saillant write: "Since Marrant's new material was strongly critical of slaveholding, and since posthumous editions printed nothing revealing antislavery sentiments and, sometimes, nothing suggesting the author's race, we can infer that the *Narrative* was whitewashed to make it an acceptable captivity

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and conversion memoir instead of a challenging antislavery work” (*Face Zion Forward* 39).

<sup>6</sup> Potkay and Burr, Marrant’s *A Narrative*: n43 (100) and (73).

<sup>7</sup> I say “remarkable” because prior to Marrant’s *Narrative*, no writer of color achieved such international reach. In addition, prior to Equiano’s *An Interesting Narrative*, no black-authored text took as great pains to deliberately construct such a credible, powerful public persona. See Potkay and Burr, 67-74. Regarding Hastings: Having the Connexion’s support to publicly craft a persona of black evangelical authority came with trepidation. In 1774, Hastings had sent David Margate, an outspoken black evangelical associated with the Connexion to Georgia to preach to her slaves in and around the Bethesda Orphanage. Whitefield left the grounds and slaves to Hastings after his death in 1770. Hastings intended for Margate to Christianize her slaves in order to quell criticism from Philadelphia Quaker Anthony Benezet, who implored her to cease “this iniquitous Traffick” in human beings, and “give what assistance is in thy power” to set her slaves free. Hastings’ solution was to send Margate to evangelize to the slaves. Rather than comply with Hastings’ wishes, once arrived in Georgia, Margate encouraged the slaves in Bethesda and in nearby South Carolina to rebel against their masters. When word of a lynching party reached Margate and other Huntingdon associates, Margate escaped on a ship back to England. This would be the last time Hastings would attempt to actively convert slaves (Schlenger 91).

<sup>8</sup> Marrant, *Journal* 94-95.

<sup>9</sup> For more on mid-late eighteenth-century reading tastes, see Cahill 1-10.

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<sup>10</sup> For more on the increased value and popularity of devotional diary and journal writing at the end of the eighteenth century, see Catherine A. Brekus “Writing as a Protestant Practice: Devotional Diaries in Early New England.” *Practicing Protestants: Histories of Christian Life in America, 1630-1965*. Ed. Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, Leigh E. Schmidt, and Mark Valeri. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2006. 19-34.

<sup>11</sup> For more on specific Puritan diarists and samples of their texts, see Brekus 22-25

<sup>12</sup> Caldwell, 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the fame of White’s narrative and a sharp analysis of the conversion narrative’s beginnings, see Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion* 1-45.

<sup>14</sup> Berland, 273-75. Berland notes several well-known examples of journalists who deftly crafted their records to stand in as historical and political narratives. Examples include Cotton Mather, John Lawson, William Byrd, Sarah Kemble Knight, Thomas Gage, Daniel Horsmanden, among others.

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that, according to Caldwell, there is a shift in tone and even desired outcomes once the conversion narrative is adopted by colonial Americans. Elizabeth White was born and died in England. While her account contained the common tropes of the genre, which continued to inform the basic structure of nearly all conversion narratives henceforth, there are notable cultural discrepancies. Due to the scope of this chapter, I have opted to leave out a detailed analysis on these differences. This is not to say that they would not yield potentially rich strands in a discussion of Marrant’s *Journal* or perhaps another study of the roots of early missionary writing. For more on the American strand of conversion narratives, see Caldwell 119-198.

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<sup>16</sup> Berland, 374-75.

<sup>17</sup> For specific examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century journal writing, see Berland 374-377.

<sup>18</sup> Lambert, *Inventing the Great Awakening* 96-97.

<sup>19</sup> Davis, "Introduction" to *George Whitefield's Journals, 1737-1747*.

<sup>20</sup> All future references to this work will be identified as *Enquiry*.

<sup>21</sup> Singer and Dunn reference Burke's most distilled theory of sublimity as it pertains to self-preservation. Burke's notion of self-preservation pivots on what he calls, Astonishment, which supersedes reason in the communicable act. If the individual is able to access the sublime, he/she can astonish an audience. Moreover, affective astonishment generates and surpasses reverence, admiration, and respect. I cite Burke's theory in full: "The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that far from being produced by them, it anticipated our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment...is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect" (101).

<sup>22</sup> Andrew Ashfield and Peter de Bolla, 2; *The Sublime: A Reader in British Eighteenth-Century Aesthetic Theory*.

<sup>23</sup> Cahill, 3.

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<sup>24</sup> For more on America as a cultural repository (or even end-point) of European Enlightenment, see Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: The Science of Freedom*. New York: Norton, 1996. 3-4.

<sup>25</sup> Cahill observes that many college curriculums did not fully integrate moral philosophy, or philosophies of “beauty and virtue,” until after 1756. Regarding Yale College, Cahill notes that the years 1765-72 were especially tumultuous as such philosophical texts began to supersede more classical studies (25). In 1771, for example, Lord Henry Home Kames’ *Elements of Criticism* was taught in a rhetoric course at Yale College. Kames’ “chapters on the emotions, passions, beauty, sublimity, and taste provided many students with their first systematic exposure to aesthetic theory and its moral and political ramifications” (26).

<sup>26</sup> Burke’s gendered anecdote is an obvious dimension to this discussion. However, due to the limited scope of this chapter, I am unable to pay it proper attention. See Meg Armstrong’s article “‘The Effects of Blackness’: Gender, Race, and the Sublime in Aesthetic Theories of Burke and Kant” for a detailed discussion of gender in Burke’s *Enquiry*.

<sup>27</sup> Scholarship on Marrant’s *Journal* is largely indebted to Brooks and Saillant’s individual and collaborative study of Marrant’s works. In addition, Cedric May, Sandra Gustafson, and most recently, Joseph Fichtelberg offer important contributions. Brooks and Saillant are, however, responsible for not only bringing Marrant’s *Journal* back into print, but also for recognizing the importance of Marrant’s strategic use of scripture as a parallel counter-narrative. As Brooks and Saillant argue throughout their scholarship,

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Marrant consciously chose select scripture as a means of speaking back to the dominant racist economic and social logics forced on Nova Scotian communities of color.

Gustafson, on the other hand, sees Marrant as utilizing the Pauline convention of transforming personal weakness into “rhetorical power.” Linking the “savage speaker” persona of Marrant’s *Narrative* with the more desperate persona of the *Journal*, Gustafson concludes that by “[o]ccupying and transforming the role of savage speaker [...] Marrant sought to convert a position of culture impotence into one of power” (110).

Fichtelberg takes a different approach, and one that this chapter touches on as it pertains to the connection between sublimity and Marrant’s *Journal*. In *Risk Culture:*

*Performance and Danger in Early America*, Fichtelberg argues that Marrant’s authority is derived from “one who recognizes his own abjection,” where “he turns his experience [of pain and cultural impotence] into both a revolutionary emblem and a testament to the continuing subjection of black bodies” (11). Marrant uses his abjection in his written narrative and his itinerant practice to enact sublime expression, which instills in its audience “that sublime moment when believers are transformed, [as they are] rooted in terror, the zero point that transforms as it disables” (124). Fichtelberg observes Marrant’s silences as moments of sublime performance, moments that evoke “a commonplace of evangelical discourse, one that might be best understood...in its play of articulate and inarticulate speech” (126). While a notable observation, I argue that Marrant’s silences are more an adaption of Burke’s theories of sublimity than a recapitulation of evangelical performative discourse.

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<sup>28</sup> Freeborn Garrettson was a white Methodist itinerant minister who preached in Nova Scotia concomitantly with Marrant. In fact, Marrant and Garrettson reference one another in each other's writings, illustrating the competition and aggravation each man felt towards the other. Garrettson published his *Journal* in Philadelphia in 1791 shortly after Marrant published his account in London. For more on Garrettson and the collection of his writings, see *American Methodist Pioneer: The Life and Journals of The Rev. Freeborn Garrettson, 1752-1827*. Ed. Robert Drew Simpson. Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1984. For Garrettson's account of Marrant (spelled Morant), see 246-249.

<sup>29</sup> I am primarily concerned with Marrant's sublime silences. While there are ample scenes of suffering, sometimes even violent and grotesque, in Marrant's *Journal*, I have opted to center this discussion on his silences. For examples of such suffering and violence in Marrant's *Journal*, see 111-113, 133-34, 141, and 146-47.

<sup>30</sup> Roger Nicole, "Covenant, Universal Call and Definite Atonement." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38.3 (1995): 403-12.

<sup>31</sup> All biblical quotations in this article come from *Holy Bible, Authorized or King James Version*. Red Letter Edition. Wichita, Kansas: Heirloom Bible Publishers, 1988.

<sup>32</sup> The seriousness of Marrant's ideological conviction is clear when, later in the *Journal*, Marrant comments on chasing out an Arminian revival: "We here see, by this, that the devil can never stand against the truth" (124).

<sup>33</sup> "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

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commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (KJV).

<sup>34</sup> Saillant’s online article is without pagination. The citation I use comes from the ninth page of his article. Saillant deduces his antislavery reading of Marrant’s *Journal* less from the narrative itself and more from Marrant’s *Sermon Preached on the 24<sup>th</sup> Day of June 1789*.

<sup>35</sup> Here, I draw from H. Porter Abbott’s discussion of narrative time, or the temporality concomitant to the plotting of text, and reader time, or the ways readers of texts experience narrative in real time. Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. 3-8.

<sup>36</sup> For Burke, “Society” signifies emotions which are void of pain and suffering and instead “dwell on the pleasure of health and the comfort of security” (87).

<sup>37</sup> For reprinted editions of these texts, see Brooks and Saillant’s *Face Zion Forward*.

<sup>38</sup> For reprinted editions of Jea’s *Narrative*, White’s *Narrative*, and an excellent critical introduction, see *Black Itinerants of the Gospel: The Narratives of John Jea and George White*. Ed. Graham Russell Hodges. Madison: Madison House, 1993; For more on Haynes, see John Saillant’s *Black Puritan, Black Republican: The Life and Thought of Lemuel Haynes, 1753-1833*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003; and for more on Alline, see G.A Rawly’s *Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1984.

<sup>39</sup> See Whitefield, *Journals* 268, 273, 276, and 319.



## CHAPTER IV

### “MY BROKEN HINTS TO APPEAR IN THE WORD”: SAMSON OCCOM’S *A SERMON, PREACHED AT THE EXECUTION OF MOSES PAUL, AN INDIAN* AND THE DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF NATIVE SOLIDARITY

In his unpublished “Personal Narrative” (1768), Samson Occom (Mohegan) discusses the arrival of the First Great Awakening among Mohegans in southern New England. Occom recalls that in the summer of 1739, itinerant preachers began ministering to Mohegan peoples. Where earlier missionaries had failed to convert Native peoples in the area, these particular ministers inspired many Mohegans to attend their churches and outdoor meetings (53). Native interest in the evangelism of the 1730s and 40s was due to several factors: a faith based in extemporaneous worship; personal conversion to a new birth in Christ through oral rather than literate means; the frequency of prayer meetings throughout rural and more populated areas; and the embrace of outdoor as well as indoor gatherings (Fisher 69). By the 1770s the Great Awakening had long subsided, leaving only pockets of revivalist culture throughout New England. The New Light stir, however, kept the theological principles of the Great Awakening alive and well among some tribes in southern New England into the nineteenth century (Fisher 199-202).

The egalitarian impulses inherent in New Light theology of the Awakening remained a key principle for white, black, and Native evangelicals in the last decades of the eighteenth century. In the last chapter, for example, I examined John Marrant’s emergence as an author who utilized the conventions of the missionary journal genre as a

means of asserting a new black Awakening discourse. The egalitarian principles of an alternative Awakening discourse were not restricted to black writers, however; Native writers also found value in adapting evangelical genres as a means of asserting personal agency and tribal interdependence. Indeed, the critical arc of this dissertation is how early writers of color, both black and Native, challenged their racialized status with the theological, rhetorical, and literary tools of the Great Awakening and New Light stir. Similar to Bryan's slaves and Marrant, Ocom crafted an alternative Awakening discourse that challenged the authority of white clergy and the racialized boundaries of print culture. Ocom's concerns were also about Native self-pride and intertribal solidarity. He accomplished this with savvy awareness of genre, audience, and reader expectation.

Perhaps the most famous execution sermon in the eighteenth century was written for the execution of Moses Paul (Wampanoag). At Paul's request, Ocom composed and delivered the execution sermon on September 2, 1772. Ocom's *A Sermon, Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian* (1772) "went through nineteen editions, ranking Ocom as the sixth leading author in the American colonies during the 1770s" (Brooks, "This Indian World" 23).<sup>1</sup> Since its recovery to contemporary literary study in 1992, Ocom's *Sermon* has been the subject of several scholarly studies (Brooks 162).<sup>2</sup> Scholars largely designate Ocom's *Sermon* as the first major work published by a Native American.<sup>3</sup> While several critics have discussed the cultural and literary significance of Ocom's *Sermon*, few have offered a sustained discussion of the *Sermon's* significance

as an adaption of the execution sermon genre as it was developed during the First Great Awakening.<sup>4</sup>

Occom's revision of the execution sermon tradition synthesizes the intertribal impulses that he shared with fellow Mohegan preacher Joseph Johnson.<sup>5</sup> The execution of Moses Paul inspired a variety of narratives which, taken together, posit parallel and competing arguments concerning racial bias and discrimination, and positions which perpetuate negative stereotypes of Native Americans. There are sermons by Occom and Jonathan Edwards, Jr.; courtroom ephemera, such as verdict petitions by Paul and his lawyer, Samuel S. Johnson, to the General Assembly and the Connecticut Court in New Haven; at least eight accounts of and advertisements for Paul's trial in various newspapers throughout New England and the mid Atlantic; an epistolary dialogue between Paul and Occom and Joseph Johnson and Paul—the latter published in pamphlet form and subsequently included in later editions of Occom's *Sermon*; and finally, two alternative narratives published in New England newspapers: a pseudo-autobiographical account by Moses Paul and a heavily edited version of Occom's *Sermon*.<sup>6</sup> If we extract the Native-composed texts, including the amanuensis-composed verdict petitions by Paul, from this high-profile event, an intertribal rhetoric emerges.<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, however, the focus is on Occom's *Sermon*. I argue that Occom's *Sermon* is a public proving ground for asserting a pantribal solidarity that bears results in the Brotherton movement.

My argument follows the work of Kimberly Roppolo (Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek) and Drew Lopenzina. In her essay "Samson Occom as Writing Instructor: The Search for an Intertribal Rhetoric," Roppolo contends that when we consider Native

discourse, oral and printed, rhetorical patterns emerge that are indeed intertribal but also tribal centered. Roppolo explains that, for example, personal experience, indirect argumentation, and intentional gaps in narrative make up an intertribal discourse that has existed in the public sphere since Native peoples began drafting petitions for land rights, signing treatises, and jotting down autobiographical narratives.<sup>8</sup> My reading of Occom's *Sermon* borrows from Roppolo's understanding of intertribal discourse as a means of contributing to Lopenzina's notion of Native discursive resistance in the colonial era. In *Red Ink: Native Americans Picking Up the Pen in the Colonial Period* (2012), Lopenzina asserts that his title's namesake, red ink, connotes "not only the written literary output of Native Americans in the colonial period, but the great difficulties of accessing a literature so over-inscribed by colonial norms and expectations—a literature that has been compulsively 'corrected' with the red ink of the colonial educator, novelist, historian, moviemaker—in short, the ubiquitous productions of dominant culture" (xi). Lopenzina's argument recovers existing colonial Native narratives and liberates them from their "sites of archival containment" (24), bringing them into broader conversations about the role of Native writers in American cultural production. With the aid of Roppolo's study of intertribal discourse, I expand Lopenzina's recovery of Native red ink by reading Occom's *Sermon* as a declaration of Native independence.

While recent studies of Native-composed texts associated with the Moses Paul execution recover and expertly interpret the red ink of Native resistance, none, to my knowledge, read Occom's *Sermon* as a transcript of intertribal sovereignty directly connected to the Brotherton movement. In reading Occom's *Sermon* as a facilitation of a

pantribal resistance, we must also be attuned to Ocom's adaption of the execution sermon genre. Printed and oral execution sermons were popular in New England from the late seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. Like all forms of formal public discourse, execution sermons served specific cultural and ideological functions. Moreover, by the time of Paul's execution, representations of condemned Native peoples carried recursive tropes of drunkenness, violence, paganism, and general mistrust.

But what are we left with once we dislodge Ocom's testament of Native sovereignty from a popular colonial genre designed to maintain settler control over the minds and geography of New England? Ocom's *Sermon* invents a public pantribal consciousness by way of popular discourse; moreover, as Ocom notes in the preface to his *Sermon*, he explicitly challenges the EuroAmerican rhetorical convention of demarcating the authority of the author and the subservience of common reader.<sup>9</sup> Clearly Native peoples asserted their solidarity and demands for sovereignty in petitions and treatises long before 1772. However, by utilizing a popular literary genre such as the execution sermon, Ocom's audience exceeded the political arena, reaching people of various classes, ethnicities, and even nationalities.<sup>10</sup> Ocom adapts the execution sermon as a means of empowering Native readers and auditors with a pragmatic vision of spiritual and material intertribal kinship that manifests in 1775 in Brotherton, New York.

The establishment of the Brotherton community had several false starts prior to its settlement in 1775. In 1762, talk of forming an intertribal community in what would become Brotherton, New York, began as a missionary scheme devised by noted British American evangelist and educator Eleazar Wheelock. Wheelock's plan, however, lacked

the support of the Six Nations and was ultimately abandoned after Sir William Johnson withdrew his support for the Congregationalist ministers whose ministerial labor was required for administering religion and literacy to Native peoples.<sup>11</sup> Five years later, in 1767, Wheelock and his colleague Nathaniel Whitaker once again attempted to revive a mission-based Native community. In a letter to friend Robert Keen, Wheelock proposed that his planned community would “furnish an Asylum for our Missionaries, set ye Savages a pattern, & exhibit to them ye advantages of a Civilized life” (Murray 171). Mohegans were still battling the Mason land dispute and faced the threat of losing what little land they had left. Wheelock saw the dissolve of Mohegan land claims as an opportunity to enact his missionary goals. But as before, Wheelock’s plans for a missionary-controlled Native community failed. By March 1773, however, several New England tribes rekindled the idea of establishing an intertribal community in Brotherton. This time, though, Wheelock and his colleagues were kept out of the community planning. The Brotherton settlement was, in the words of Bernd C. Peyer, “an all-Indian affair” (83). Rather than moving according to white colonial criteria, Native peoples were taking control of their own resettlement. The circumstances leading to this exercise of communal control were nonetheless traumatic.

By 1772-1773, Mohegans and other New England tribes faced continued settler land encroachment, disease, and indentured servitude, all of which drastically compromised kinship bonds, religious practices, and intertribal trade economies.<sup>12</sup> The execution of Moses Paul in 1772 came at a time of great hardship and, concurrently, tremendous promise for Native sovereignty in Brotherton. In March 1773, representatives

from the Farmington, Mohegan, Montauk, Narragansett, Niantic, Pequot, and Stonington tribes met to plan the logistics for resettling in Brotherton (Murray 170).<sup>13</sup> The opportunity for a pantribal community designed by and for Native peoples was a welcomed alternative to the desperate state of many tribes throughout New England. Occom, Johnson, and Montauk David Fowler assumed leadership with the transition to Brotherton, and with good reason. Occom was a prominent preacher and political representative for the Mohegan; Johnson had a long-standing relationship at Farmington as an established and well-respected religious leader; and Fowler worked closely with Occom in ministering to various Native tribes throughout New England in the 1760s. Of these participants, Occom had the most experience publicly championing Native matters: prior to Paul's trial, Occom composed two important petitions on behalf of the Mohegan tribe in 1764.<sup>14</sup> However, Paul's execution was an opportunity for Occom to reach his largest and most diverse audience.

Occom also knew the cultural significance of public executions. He had attended the execution of Elizabeth Shaw on December 18, 1745, and would have been aware of the diversity and number of people who came to witness such events.<sup>15 16</sup> In addition, Shaw's execution withstanding, Occom more than likely had a good sense of the popularity and ease of availability of printed execution sermons because they were affordable to the New England public, even to the lowest of social classes.<sup>17</sup> Shaw's execution was, according to Joanna Brooks, "the first public execution" in Windham, Connecticut, and would have certainly drawn a large crowd due to its novelty (*Writings* 249 n. 7). Paul's execution was only the second performed in Connecticut, the last one

being Shaw's. Therefore, even without the added sensationalism of a Mohegan preacher delivering a sermon to a condemned Wampanoag man, Paul's execution would have drawn a large crowd.

There is little mention in the scholarship of Ocom's *Sermon* as a public proving ground for asserting the ideals necessary to establish a sovereign intertribal community. Ocom's *Sermon* is discussed as an exemplar of "a Christian indigenist worldview" (Brooks, *Writings* 164) and "also the earliest concrete example of the confluence of Indian oral tradition and European literacy" (Peyer 95). However, Ocom's *Sermon* is also an assertion of Native solidarity and a decisive public challenge to colonial racism.

### **Turning Towards Native Religious Solidarity: Ocom, Eleazar Wheelock, and the Road to Brotherton**

Ocom's motivations for establishing a pantribal community in Brotherton were born out prejudicial religious and cultural experiences and a direct entanglement in Mohegan land disputes with the Connecticut General Assembly. Leading up to Moses Paul's 1772 execution, Mohegans were still embattled in the Mason land controversy, a legal battle that began well over a century prior. The Mohegan-Mason land dispute originated in 1659 when Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas bequeathed Mohegan land jurisdiction to Major John Mason, a Mohegan ally during the Pequot War. Over the course of seventy years, Mohegans attempted to negotiate permanent ownership of their lands with both the British Royal Commission and the General Court of the Colony of Connecticut. In 1721, these negotiations ended with the Connecticut Court's rejection of



the Royal Commission's support of Mohegan land claims and the forced acquisition of Mohegan hunting and fishing grounds (Brooks, "This Indian World" 11).<sup>18</sup>

By 1770, several other New England tribes faced aggressive white encroachment. Throughout New England, traditional hunting and fishing grounds were being seized by settlers under the authority of colonial government. By 1772, the impact "of colonization on traditional subsistence and trade economies made Native individuals and families especially vulnerable to the pressure to sell lands for money. Land sales, in turn, contributed to the dissolution of the place-based kinship and intertribal networks that economically, culturally, spiritually, and politically sustained tribal communities" (Brooks 11-12). Occom witnessed first-hand the severity of these cultural and familial disruptions and was also deeply troubled by the racially-motivated instigations of their religious and educational mentor, Eleazar Wheelock.

Occom's mentee relationship with Wheelock was intertwined with Wheelock's growing ambitions regarding Native cultural and religious surveillance. Wheelock began his career home-schooling young white evangelical preachers at his home in Lebanon Crank, Connecticut, located in Mohegan territory. Wheelock was educated at Yale but disciplined for his active itinerant preaching during the Great Awakening revivals of the late 1730s.<sup>19</sup> Wheelock consequently refocused his energy on tutelage relationships with Native and white students and mostly stayed away from itinerant preaching, opting instead to work behind the scene.

The Great Awakening reached Mohegan territory in 1739.<sup>20</sup> While Wheelock preached around New England, itinerant preacher and radical James Davenport came to

Mohegan.<sup>21</sup> Occom writes that when he was young, the occasional English minister would visit Mohegan during the summer months to preach among his tribe, but they would generally be ignored unless they brought blankets, “and for these things they [Mohegans] would attend” (“Narrative” 52). However, in 1741 Occom reports that “we heard a Strange Rumor among the English, that there were Extraordinary Ministers Preaching from Place to Place and a Strange Concern among the White People” (53). Eventually Davenport reached Mohegan and greatly affected those who attended his sermons. Occom writes that in 1741, when he was sixteen, “These Preachers did not only Come to us, but we frequently went to their meetings and Churches.” By this recurrent interaction, Occom admits, “I found Trouble of Mind was awakened & convicted, I Went to all the meetings...[which continued] about 6 months...at which time I began to Learn the English Letters” (53). Shortly thereafter, Occom sought out Wheelock for homeschooling. Johnson, on the other hand, would not join the Moor’s Indian Charity School until 1758, and did not convert to Christianity until 1771.<sup>22</sup> Occom, therefore, had a longer association with Wheelock and consequently spent more time understanding Wheelock’s long-term goals for the tribes of New England.

In 1743, after hearing about Wheelock from his mother, a domestic laborer in Lebanon Crank, Occom decided to call on Wheelock for schooling.<sup>23</sup> Occom’s time studying with Wheelock was fruitful, and Occom discovered a passion for education and an aptitude for preaching among neighboring Native communities. Occom was Wheelock’s pupil from 1743-47, learning to read, write, and familiarize himself with the Christian gospels. In 1746-47, Occom admits the desire to “Instruct poor Children in

Reading” and began “frequently to talk with our Indians Concerning Religion” (54). Over the next decade, Oocom married, started a family, was officially ordained by the Suffolk, Long Island, Presbytery, and struggled to maintain financial stability for himself and his family.<sup>24</sup> His letters and journals describe a life of discomfort (Oocom struggled with poor eyesight his entire life) and frustration with New England clergy for their inconsistent financial and spiritual support. However, for Wheelock, Oocom was a shining example of a converted, “civilized” Native, and provided him the perfect example for proposing plans for a more structured system of Indian conversion.<sup>25</sup>

In 1756, Wheelock’s conception of his Moor’s Indian Charity School had shifted from a refuge for education and theology to a space for churning out under-paid Native missionaries. In a 1756 letter to George Whitefield, Wheelock writes:

To take of their own Children, (two or three of a Tribe, that they may not Loose their own Language) and give them an Education among ourselves, under the Tuition, & Guidance, of a godly, & Skillful Master; Where they may, not only, have means to make them Schollars, but the best Means to Make them Christians [...] to fit them the Gospel Ministry among their respective Tribes.<sup>26</sup>

Wheelock recognized the difficulties of training white ministers and sending them to evangelize in Native communities. A solution, then, would be to train Native children and send them back to their tribes. Joanna Brooks observes that for Wheelock, Native missionaries “would be better accustomed to the hardships of life in the ‘wilderness,’ and they would expect less compensation for their labors from missionary societies” (16). Of course, as Oocom attests in his “Narrative,” this was nothing more than racially motivated robbery (58).

Throughout the 1750s and much of the 1760s, Occom's relationship with Wheelock remained amicable, but following Occom's trip to England, Scotland, and Ireland (1766-68) their friendship disintegrated. Occom's concern for Mohegan land rights was only exasperated when Wheelock moved Moor's Indian Charity School from Lebanon, Connecticut, a convenient location for Mohegan attendees, to the mostly white-inhabited Hanover, New Hampshire. This new location all but restricted Mohegan attendance, and for Wheelock, that was precisely the point. In his first *Narrative* (1763) meant to entice donors for the school, Wheelock asserts that his Native pupils were "perfectly easy and contented with their Situation and Employment as any at a Father's House." They were so content, writes Wheelock, "I scarcely hear a Word of their going Home, so much as for a visit."<sup>27</sup> Letters from Delaware pupil Hezekiah Calvin suggest otherwise. Calvin writes in 1768: "There is something in my Mind all the time. I want to go Home soon & see my Relations." In another letter, Calvin painfully admits, "when I am alone I am almost crazy I will catch my hair & pull & Cry, for to go Home."<sup>28</sup> In private, Wheelock admitted that none of his Native pupils was living up to his standards, as they were too "proud" and that their "proximity to their people prohibited the wholesale cultural conversion he aspired to" (Murray 54-55). In 1768, Wheelock relocated the school to New Hampshire, taking in mostly white students alongside a few Native pupils.<sup>29</sup> Occom saw the removal of the school to New Hampshire to be detrimental to Mohegan and, more generally, Native progress in combating colonial legislation for land seizures.

Occom saw the value in the original purpose of the Moor's School to educate Native peoples in the basics of reading, writing, and scripture, but he was dismayed at Wheelock's revision of the curriculum to better suit an upper white class. After returning from England to find his wife and children in dire circumstance, a result of Wheelock's negligence, Occom wrote to Wheelock expressing angry dissatisfaction with the state of the Moor's School. Occom writes:

I am very Jealous that instead of your Semenary Becoming alma Mater, she will be too alba mater to Suckle the Tawnees, for She is already aDorn'd up too much like the Popish Virgin Mary [...] So many of your Missionaries and School masters and Indian Scholars Leaving You and Your Service me in this opinion,—your having So many White Scholars and So few or no Indian Scholars, gives me great Discouragement—I verily thought once that you Institution was Intended Purely for the poor Indians with this I thought I Cheerfully Ventur'd my Body & Soul, left my Country my poor young Family all my friends and Relations, to sail over the Boisterous Seas to England to help forward your School, Hoping that it may be a lasting Benefit to my poor Tawnee Brethren.<sup>30</sup>

The turn of phrase from “alma Mater” to “alba mater” is racially and political charged.

Occom suggests that what was once an institution for the body and soul (alma mater “meaning mother of the soul”) is now an alba mater (white mother) (Brooks 98 n.68).

The school's directive had focused on settler students as opposed to Native education. As Occom notes, it was under the pretense of procuring funds for Native education that he went to England. Now that Wheelock's motivations had changed, Occom had several worries in addition to the well-being of his family. He was concerned about his reputation in England, because he had courted clergy in England, Scotland, and Ireland to solicit funds for Native spiritual education at the expense, so it seems, of his own dignity.<sup>31</sup> But more important, Occom's Native brethren would be shut off from a long term broadening

of their knowledge of colonial culture.<sup>32</sup> Following his return from England, Occom's ambitions focused entirely on the spiritual and political solidarity of Native peoples.

### **“To Suffer My Broken Hints”: Occom's Assessment of Colonial Print Culture**

Occom's published *Sermon* intervenes in a print discourse dominated by racially motivated newspaper account and white-authored “Indian” narratives associated with Paul's execution. As soon as plans were set for Occom to deliver his sermon, New England newspapers sold the spectacle of an Indian preacher ministering to a murderous, drunken Indian. Shortly after Paul's execution, broadsides and newspaper-run narratives attempted to authenticate the event by printing alternative perspectives supposedly written or related by Occom and Paul.

The execution opened up a discursive space for timeworn anti-Indian colonial narratives and the emergence of a subversive Native counter-narrative. On December 20, 1771, the day of Paul's trial, the *New London Gazette* published an account of Cook's death and Paul's apparent premeditation in killing Cook. Both men are represented by their presumed racial statuses. Cook is given the title “Mr.” while Paul is labeled as “Indian.” Paul is represented as a lurking, vengeful, and murderous “Indian,” “who lay in wait” “in order to put his threat in execution.” Paul's motivation is clearly stated in the first sentence of the account: the tavern owner, Mrs. Clark, “refus[ed] to let him have a dram,” and so, after becoming “disorderly,” “was turned out of doors.”<sup>33</sup> On September 11, 1772, nine days after Paul's execution, the *New London Gazette* printed a version of Paul's final moments. The account continues the stereotypes asserted in the December article, but this time through the ventriloquized voice of Paul: “he took a most

affectionate Leave of his Countrymen the Indians, (many of whom were present) and exhorted them to shun those Vices to which they are so much addicted, viz. Drunkenness, Revenge, &c.”<sup>34</sup> When paired together, these two accounts from the *Gazette* posit a cyclical, stereotypical narrative of predisposition and consequence: the Indian, a creature predisposed to drunkenness and covert, spontaneous violence, is expunged by colonial justice. But he cannot meet the rope before reiterating and therefore reinforcing the implicated stereotype in which he was first introduced to the colonial public. Paul was introduced by the *Gazette* as drunken, vengeful, and thus, by verbalizing a warning of these charges to his fellow Native listeners, becomes a complete and validated stereotype.

Occom’s *Sermon* is prefaced by the recognition of rhetorical space and a means for asserting a critical intervention. Occom notes that the “world is already full of books” and people “have enough and more than enough” (177). Nonetheless, Occom writes, “there are two or three considerations, that have induced me to be willing to suffer my broken hints to appear in the world.” The purpose of the *Sermon*, Occom continues, is to cut through the “high and lofty stile” of books and sermons and to communicate to the marginalized and disenfranchised—to “be of service” to the “poor Negroes” and “my poor kindred the Indians,” in “plain, every-day talk” (177). Occom could have maintained the use of embedded hints in his *Sermon* to get at the “great work” he feels God has in store for him (177). Yet, Occom opts to categorically decipher the hints as an act of authorial control over his subject matter. He empowers himself to speak as a Native.

Indeed, Occom speaks clearly in his *Sermon* of the sinfulness of drunkenness, of the “poor miserable object who is to be executed” for “his folly and madness, and enormous wickedness.” But this clarity is not entirely designed to chastise Paul. Occom acknowledges Paul to be “bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh” and, like himself, “an Indian, a despised creature” (188). Occom opens his sermon to Paul by noting this distinction so as to immediately differentiate between the sin and the Native. Sin is a leveler of all humans, regardless of race or station in life.<sup>35</sup> Matt Salyer reads Occom’s positioning of Paul as a useful “foil, the opposite pole to his own permanent liminal position, which was the source of his authority” (87). Here, Salyer echoes Michael Elliott’s important reading of Occom as “a speaker derived from this liminal state in which his Indian identity was never under complete erasure” as he “represented an ongoing conversion to English society that could never be completed” (234). Elliott’s thesis is a useful study of Occom’s authorial persona, but it is not necessarily pertinent to my reading of Occom’s broken hints. Salyer’s interpretation of Occom’s motivations in the *Sermon* is less useful. Occom does, in fact, care about Paul’s spiritual well-being because he faces execution for possessing the same lack of will power demonstrated in countless other Native peoples. How can Native peoples expect political sovereignty when they consistently ignore their powers of rationality and communal consciousness?

In the last section of Occom’s *Sermon*, he addresses Native audiences on drunkenness in order to emphasize the necessity of choice and rationality in their conceptions of themselves and their communities. For Occom, Paul is not a foil for exerting Occom’s authority but rather a victim of his own undoing who has been



rendered visible to his Native kin. Paul's fatal circumstances are a symptom of a pattern of behavior that typifies a self-loathing that is epidemic in Native communities. Occom writes: "[T]his sin, this abominable, this beastly and accursed sin of drunkenness, that has stript us of every desirable comfort in this life; by this we are poor, miserable and wretched; by this sin we are despised in the world, and it is all right and just, for we despised ourselves more; and if we don't regard ourselves, who will regard us?" (192).<sup>36</sup> Occom's argument hinges on the power of choice and the destruction that is yielded by its neglect. "[W]hen we are intoxicated with strong drink," Occom argues, "we drown our rational powers, by which we are distinguished from the brutal creation." "[W]e chuse to be beasts and devils; God made us rational creatures, and we chuse to be fools" (192). When one robs one's self of the faculties of the mind, Occom concludes, "he is good for nothing in the world; he is of no service to himself, to his family, to his neighbors, or his country" (193). Occom's point is clear: Native peoples must recognize that they are strong, capable human beings who must seize control of their lives and move forward as a unified people.

Occom's argument to Natives is all the more prescient because on November 6, 1772, two days after the publication of his *Sermon*, a broadside appeared in Connecticut that ventriloquizes Occom's voice. The broadside, "Mr. Occom's Address to His Indian Brethren," is a poem, narrated in the first person, and separated into sixteen stanzas. The poem focuses entirely on the Indian temperance section of Occom's *Sermon*. The broadside appealed to colonists' fascination with an Indian preacher sermonizing on drunkenness to another Indian. There is little surprise that the author of the broadside

omitted the bulk of the sermon in order to focus on Indian depravity. While the text pulls particular phrases from Occom's *Sermon*, it also ratchets up Indian stereotyping by adding a sexualized dimension to the narrative. For example, in stanza four, the author writes:

A dreadful wo pronounc'd by God on high,  
To all that in this sin do lie;  
O devilish beastly lust, accursed sin,  
Has almost stript us all of every thing.<sup>37</sup>

The second line's use of "sin" connotes drunkenness; however, the use of the phrase "devilish beastly lust" elicits what Steven Neuwirth observes as the "Indian-qua-savage stereotype," which, before European settlements in North America, "depicted indigenous people of America" as "ruled by appetite rather than human beings governed by reason" (64). Thus, Occom's argument for rationality in his *Sermon* attempts to curtail the racist logics literally pasted on the walls of colonial towns, cities, and villages.

Occom's argument for Native self-reliance in his *Sermon* was in preparation for the Brotherton movement. On January 22, 1771, white missionary Samuel Kirkland wrote Occom from the Oneida territory in New York. Kirkland proposed that Occom and Montauk preacher David Fowler should relocate to the Oneida territory in order help with missionary efforts. The pay, Kirkland promised, would be comparable to their current incomes, and they could do good works among the Oneida.<sup>38</sup> For Occom and Fowler, the time was not yet right for resettlement (Love 207-08). But, by 1772, a pantribal resettlement to Brotherton was gaining serious traction. In a 1772 letter from Occom to missionary benefactor Andrew Gifford, Occom reports: "I have good news to tell you,

the Lord has been among the poor Indians round about here, Several have been hopefully Converted within a year, and they are very attentive to the Word of God, I have Preached abundantly amongst them” (101).<sup>39</sup> Occom’s noted success preaching among neighboring New England tribes was also an attempt to quell Native concerns over increased tensions associated with sachem land mismanagement. W. DeLoss Love writes that Occom’s “missionary experience” led him to understand that “unless the Indian held land which he could not alienate” when “the temptation to sell himself out of house and home” arose, the disintegration of tribal lands was inevitable (208). Occom, of course, had been negotiating for Mohegan land rights in the ongoing Mason-Mohegan land dispute since 1741.

Occom went to England in 1764 under personal and professional duress in order to procure additional funds for Wheelock’s Moor’s Indian Charity School and as a Mohegan representative in the Mason-Mohegan land case.<sup>40</sup> Occom was selected as a councilor to Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas II in 1741.<sup>41</sup> By 1743, he was attending hearings on the Mason-Mohegan land case in Norwich, Connecticut.<sup>42</sup> By the time Occom arrived in England, he had abandoned his support of Mohegan sachem Ben Uncas III, Uncas II’s successor, who was “a puppet of the Connecticut administration” (Peyer 72). Uncas III leased Mohegan land to white settlers without consulting the tribal council and as a result, Occom sided with Mohegan “demands for restitution” of lands lost (72). In turn, “Occom had the Mohegans sign a petition to King George III in which the tribe expressed the desire to be placed under the immediate protection of the crown in exchange for the lands in question” (72).<sup>43</sup> Ultimately, the Connecticut government won

the case and seized the majority of Mohegan hunting and fishing territories.<sup>44</sup> By 1772 Mohegan and Charleston Natives sought to actively retain their “hereditary and tribal” customs and “form a new tribe, governed by such rulers as they might select.” Love concludes, “[t]heir model was the Connecticut town government” where they were determined to “live together as ‘brothers’” (209). In 1772-73, Joseph Johnson, fellow Mohegan preacher, spiritual leader, and son-in-law to Occom, composed an open letter to “All Enquiring Friends.”<sup>45</sup> Johnson’s letter successfully used the momentum of Occom’s *Sermon* as a tool for recruiting New England tribes to join the Brotherton movement. But the success of Occom’s *Sermon* goes beyond a testament of Native uplift and cause for cultural empowerment.

**“And Now It is A Little Altered and Enlarged in Some Places”: Occom’s *Sermon* as a Declaration of Native Sovereignty**

Occom’s *Sermon* adapts the long-standing rhetorical conventions of the New England execution sermon. Occom asserts notions of Native self-empowerment as a means of energizing New England Native culture for the project of resettlement in Brotherton. By the time of the American Revolution, land grants, petitions, and treatises illustrated the emergence of what Phillip Round calls “Indian Publics” (*Removable* 98).<sup>46</sup> As early as 1748, a Nantick author was writing in the public sphere in defense of Natick fishing rights.<sup>47</sup> Round sees Occom’s *Sermon*, however, as a distinct performance of “Indianness.” Round contends that for late eighteenth-century Native writers such as Samson Occom and Joseph Johnson, their “‘Christian’ persona” “most often seems to authorize their entry into public debate” (98). Moreover, “[i]nternal evidence in the

[execution] sermon suggests that Occom did indeed conceive of an ‘Indian public’ and of himself as an ‘Indian’ speaker” (101). Following Round’s assertions, then, we see the success of Occom’s *Sermon* as attributed to the performance of a colonial-proper Christianized Indian. There is no reason to contest this interpretation, because the regional reaction responded as such: Occom’s *Sermon* elicited false narratives throughout southern New England that exploited Occom’s temperance message to his fellow Native listeners and readers. These texts were composed by whites for whites. The broadside, for example, was intended to capitalize on the sensation of Occom’s ministerial performance. But the broadside also illustrates the extent to which Occom penetrated the colonial public sphere. While colonial audiences fetishized Occom’s Indianness and the apparent irony of his lecture on temperance, his adaptation of the colonial execution sermon for specific Native concerns is less understood. To this end, I extend the dimensions of Occom’s self-composed Indianness, as Round sees it, and suggest that Occom’s amendment of the execution sermon is as much a symbolic as it is literal declaration of Native sovereignty.

Since its conception in the late seventeenth century, the published execution contained three specific components. First, the printed text elaborated and further explained the doctrine (or primary argument) preached. As Occom suggests in the preface to his *Sermon*, this elaboration tended to alienate common uneducated readers or listeners.<sup>48</sup> The doctrine was then “taken asunder” and stated in a series of confirmations or proofs. Finally, with the doctrine confirmed, the message was specifically applied to the condemned and, by extension, the general audience.<sup>49</sup> Doctrines commonly retained a

similar significance: they implied or directly conveyed an authoritarian order between the clergy and layperson; chose deductive rather than exploratory argumentation; and generally conveyed a closed system of moral control over readers (and auditors).<sup>50</sup> While there was some shift of focus from an overt macro-social rhetoric to a more condemned-specific directive, the parameters of the doctrine were always designed to apply to the wider community.<sup>51</sup>

Occom's *Sermon* follows the traditional structural conventions of the execution sermon, but significantly revises the sermon's typical message. The doctrine of Occom's *Sermon* is, on the one hand, the salvation of Moses Paul's soul; on the other, as Occom writes, "the fervent exercise of our souls...knowing that we are all dying creatures, and accountable unto God" (178). Occom collapses social and, more specifically, racial hierarchies under the weight of universal sin. Kimberly Roppolo argues that an intertribal Native discourse relies on an "indirect form of discourse based on synthesis rather than analysis" (309). Occom's indirect criticism of prejudicial theology adheres to what Roppolo calls the "'rule' of [Native] politeness" (316). Roppolo explains: "When someone has done something either wrong or foolish when an error needs to be addressed, care is often taken, at least traditionally, that that person does not feel 'put on the spot,' that he or she can remedy his or her mistake without losing honor" (316). Roppolo cites Occom's "Personal Narrative" as an example of indirect criticism (317-18). But his *Sermon*'s doctrine and confirmation of doctrine, too, elicit such a move.

Preaching from Romans 6: 23, Occom underscores the universality of sin. Occom writes that "sin is the cause of all miseries that befall the children of men, both as to their

bodies and souls, for time and eternity” (179). Occom’s doctrine is, then, the collective consequence of sin against God, a striking example that indirectly criticizes colonial Christian prejudice. Here, Occom carefully differentiates the outcomes for the body and soul following death. His lecture on the dissolution of the body underscores the triviality of pleasure and pain, comfort and loss when faced with eternal damnation of the soul (184). His discourse on the fate of the unsaved soul recalls Jonathan Edwards’s *Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God* (1743). Occom, like Edwards, does not spare readers and listeners from the imagery of the soul’s “wo and misery, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” (184). Indeed, he depicts with considerable energy “an angry and frowning GOD, whose eyes are as a flaming fire” (185). Occom uses the conclusion of a sinful life, with body and soul divorced from God, as a transition into a confirmation of the doctrine.

Occom’s confirmation of the doctrine is essential to understanding his application of doctrine. His application ratchets up the intensity of indirect discourse and asserts what Roppolo identifies as Native discourse. The terrestrial circumstance of the unrepentant sinner, permanently suspended in an “eternity” of “unexhausted duration,” is of no consequence to God. Occom confirms: “This must be the unavoidable portion of all impenitent sinners, let them be who they will, great or small, honorable or ignoble, rich or poor, bond or free, Negroes, Indians, English or of what nations soever; all that die in their sins must go to hell together, for the wages of sin is death” (185). Occom uses sin as a leveler of class, race, and nationality; he posits his doctrine of repentance as a cosmic and universal truth—an indirect critique of colonial Christian bias. At this junction,

“Occom used his preaching to turn the spectacle of an Indian execution into an opportunity for indicting the inherent sinfulness of all people—white, black and Native” (Brooks, *Collected Works* 162). But he goes further than a universal indictment: Occom’s denunciation is a *tabula rasa*, a rhetorical cleansing of colonial assumptions about Indian savagery and the presumed, white-inclusive means of achieving salvation.

Occom’s selection of biblical anecdotes closely mirrors both his experiences in England as well as his general disposition on anti-Native sentiment in the American colonies. According to Roppolo, [i]n Native culture, experience in general—whether the experiences of the culture encoded in a story, the experiences of an authoritative elder, or the experiences of an individual who shares the same cultural values—is held as evidence.” “In fact,” concludes Roppolo, “this is precisely what invests a person with ‘authority’ in Native cultures: experience that leads to maturity” (306-07). Following his confirmation of doctrine, Occom redirects the explication of the sermon towards deciphering the meaning of “life and happiness” “thro Jesus Christ our Lord” (185). Occom balances the apocalyptic consequences of denying Christ with the “true Christian” who “desires no other heaven but the enjoyment of God” (186). Occom first notes St. Paul, for “after he was converted,” “he was hated, revil’d, despised, laughed at, and called all manner of evil names.” But Paul “would courageously go on in preaching the gospel...in spite of all opposition he met” (186). For Occom, Paul’s tenacity is qualified by public struggle—ridicule, rejection, and imprisonment. Occom concludes this depiction of Paul by directing readers to 2 Corinthians 11:23: “are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I. Are they



ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I *am* more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft” (KJV). The correlation between Paul’s account of cultural exile and public rejection corresponds with Occom’s time in England.

In a 1771 letter to Eleazar Wheelock, Occom scolds his former mentor for betraying the mission of Moor’s Indian Charity School. Occom had left his family in dire circumstances in order to procure funding for the Indian Charity School, a program from which he graduated and that he saw as an imperative for Native ministerial and legal success. When Occom was a student, the curriculum included Latin, Greek, and theology; these forms of education were designed to prepare Native peoples to enter the ministry and/or engage colonial law makers. By 1770, Wheelock abandoned the liberal arts curriculum for more rudimentary skills such as farming.<sup>52</sup> Wheelock moved the school from Lebanon, Connecticut, to Hanover, New Hampshire. The move was orchestrated, in part, because Wheelock tired of his Native students and sought out white patronage in New Hampshire. Occom writes, “I was quite Willing to become a Gazing Stock, Yea Even a Laughing Stock, in Strange Countries to Promote your Cause [...] but as long as you have no Indians, I am full of Doubts” (99).<sup>53</sup> The rhetoric of Occom’s *Sermon* is imbued with his involvements in England. His experiences as a transatlantic preacher were not a secret, especially to his fellow Mohegan.

Still, Occom’s comments may appear self-concerning but they are, in fact, derived from an awareness of the on-going legal battle among the Mohegan, the Connecticut General Assembly, and the British Crown. As I note in the previous section, Mohegan

lands were being seized by a decree of the General Assembly, and the other part of Occom's mission in England was to deliver a signed Mohegan petition to King George III. Occom's response to Wheelock, then, comes from a lengthier letter that calls attention to desperate circumstances at Mohegan and his dismay for being duped, stranded overseas, and apparently ridiculed. Occom's Pauline anecdote recalls not only his personal awareness of being marginalized and rejected on his travels, but also the general ridicule of Native peoples throughout the British Atlantic world. This tension carries over into his final anecdote on Daniel and lion's den.

Like Paul, Daniel's perseverance through betrayal and ridicule is a testament to his security of faith in God. "Thus it was with Daniel and Paul," writes Occom, "they went thro' fire and water, as the common saying is, because they had eternal life in their souls in eminent manner" (187). That Occom denotes "life and happiness" from these two examples implies a critique of Native disenfranchisement. Occom implicates his Native audience with scripture: this is an example of indirect critical discourse, a dissertation authorized by personal experience. Occom concludes that sin is universal and should be a reminder that the same fate waits for all who turn from Christ.

Occom also includes a means for pursuing happiness while living. Occom relates this design by selecting two of the most persecuted figures in scripture. We must ask ourselves, why? The sentence following the phrase "Thus it was with Daniel and Paul" briefly mentions the "fore-fathers of the English, in this country, had this life and are gone." Perhaps with some degree of irony, Occom points to his travels in England, where he observed a spot reserved for executing religious dissenters as a qualifier for these

English martyrs (187). Occom is undoubtedly sincere in recognizing Christian martyrdom, but his emotionally-charged choice of verbs describing Paul's public ridicule more closely reflects his own exploitation. Thus, Occom's confirmation of doctrine establishes sin as an equalizer among all people; moreover, he illustrates a typological tension that plagues the tribes of New England. But rather than isolate his doctrine in hellfire, Occom provides a glimpse at finding balance in living in happiness with Christ. This balance, however, is grounded in the realism of Native economic marginalization and social scorn. Native peoples, Occom implies, must be willing and able to combat these challenges. There is little surprise, then, that he transitions into the application of doctrine by immediately situating Moses Paul as, in part, a consequence of failing to obtain the skills necessary to acquire life and happiness in Christ.

Occom's application of doctrine begins with the condemned, as is the tradition of execution sermon; however, he situates Paul as a powerful example for his Native audience. Occom begins by candidly speaking to Paul: "I shall speak plainly to you.— You are the bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh. You are an Indian, a despised creature." Here, Occom reiterates the same verb used to describe St. Paul: despised. The use of this transitive verb situates Moses Paul in the typological narrative of the previous section—thus, in the nexus of indirect criticism. Yet, rather than liken Moses Paul to St. Paul, Occom concludes: "but you have despised yourself; yea you have despised God more; you have trodden under foot his authority; you have despised his commands and precepts; And now, as God says, be sure you sins will find you out" (188). Occom reverses the verb "despise" from an external, prejudicial condemnation to a personal fault

of Paul's. Paul internalized his marginality and converted it into self-loathing and, as a consequence, averted God's law. Occom's repetition and sequencing of the verb emphasizes the centrality of his argument: if a Native person hates him/herself as a result of internalizing colonial racism, he/she can never achieve true happiness in God. Roppolo observes that another hallmark of an intertribal Native critical discourse is the use of "repetition and recursivity" (309). Occom's lecture to Moses Paul reiterates the language and themes of the scriptural anecdotes used in his confirmation of doctrine. This recursivity is designed to highlight the dissonance between Native empowerment and poor decision-making. There can be no new beginning, no resettlement in Brotherton, without curing self-loathing, one of the roots of Native despair and a primary facilitator of alcoholism.

The Brotherton movement was conceptualized as an intertribal Christian community. Such a project will never succeed, Occom implies, unless Native peoples revive their self-worth and, consequently, their relationship with Christ. Indirectly criticizing colonialism is only useful if there are plans in place to recalibrate the cultural center. Occom's application of doctrine argues that happiness on earth and with God begins with positive perceptions of the self; to fall short is to risk succumbing to the vices and behaviors that lead the body and soul to the gallows.

Reading Occom's application of doctrine as an intertribal literary discourse contributes to Drew Lopezina's notion of "red ink," because Occom adapts the conventions of the colonial execution sermon as a means of redirecting Native consciousness towards Christian, Native-led community building.<sup>54</sup> Lopezina asserts

that the first Native writers have been traditionally regarded by literary critics and historians as cultural anomalies who possessed atypical skills of written communication and who embraced European norms as a means of securing their own success (6). Lopenzina challenges these assumptions by recalibrating “our understanding of the colonial period and the dynamics of contact,” and in so doing, “comprehend and delineate the motives of these individuals, their writings, and the unacknowledged indigenous epistemologies they served” (6). “Red ink,” then, is the recovered Native-composed texts that infiltrate communicative discourses that are “over-inscribed by colonial norms and expectations” and that have a legacy of being “compulsively ‘corrected’” by EuroAmerican settlers (xi). Ocom uses his application of doctrine with Paul’s station at the gallows as a means for qualifying, via the conventions of intertribal critical discourse, his message to Native readers and auditors. Ocom’s application of doctrine to his Native audience violates the socio-political conventions of the execution sermon and thus subverts the EuroAmerican master narrative of white settler superiority.

Ocom opens his address to “My poor kindred” in order to draw Native readers into the tragic fold of Paul’s execution. Ocom writes: “You see the woful consequences of sin, by seeing this, our poor miserable countryman now before us, who is about to die” (192). Ocom locates the catalyst for Paul’s sin in drunkenness, saying “this abominable, this beastly and accused sin of drunkenness, that has stript us of every desirable comfort in this life” (192). Ocom, then, gets at the crux of his message: “by this sin we have no name nor credit in the world among polite nations; for this sin we are despised in the world, and it is all right and just, for we despised ourselves more; and if we don’t regard

ourselves who will regard us?” (192). Here, Occom opens up the context of “the despised self” to the Native community at large. Indeed, his confirmation and application of doctrine is designed for this moment. Harkening back to his confirmation of doctrine, Occom reiterates the theme of human equality: “God made us men, and we chuse to be beast and devils; God made us rational creatures, and we chuse to be fools” (192). One drinks to drunkenness because one despises one’s self, Occom states. Drunkenness is a symptom of personal choice, and the stigma it carries undercuts British and British American opinions of Native peoples. For Occom, Native land tenure, moreover, Native political sovereignty is at stake; the opinions of the colonial government do, in fact, matter for Native cultural survival.<sup>55</sup> But Occom’s means for solving Native oppression does not conform to colonial norms and expectations. Instead, Occom uses the politically and theological charged genre of the execution sermon as a means of remedying the psychological and physical ailments suffered by Native peoples. He destabilizes the colonial master narrative that relies on racist stereotypes to reify and perpetuate its dominance in colonial culture. Such cultural ministering is essential to readying the hearts and minds of New England tribes preparing to start anew at Brotherton.

Occom’s intertribal rhetoric of red ink—a Native-centered discourse couched in the application of his sermon doctrine—is a result of indigenous epistemologies garnered by personal and professional experience. Occom’s doctrine did not erupt into existence solely based on the execution event. The argument of his doctrine is a result of lived hardships under the yoke of clerical and political racism—as I noted above regarding his fundraising trip to England. Occom’s application of doctrine to a Native audience is,

indeed, a preparatory address that locates its rhetorical strength in an intertribal rhetoric grounded in oral narrative conventions. Occom's message to his fellow Native readers and auditors is one of spiritual and psychological independence: liberation from self-loathing that is a symptom of land displacement, poverty, starvation, disease, and settler violence. Occom's application of doctrine is indeed an assertion of Native sovereignty; however, this is foremost a declaration of independence for the Native mind and soul. As Occom states, "we are despised in the world, and it is all right and just, for we despised ourselves more; and if we don't regard ourselves who will regard us?" (192). Native political sovereignty is certainly part of this sermonizing, as the quotation implies; but, Occom realizes the futility of such desires when high profile cases against Indians, such as the execution of Moses Paul, continue to reinforce racist stereotypes.

As I noted earlier in this chapter, the popularity of Occom's *Sermon* influenced the composition of white-authored texts in an attempt to exploit Paul's execution and to make a spectacle out of Occom; but, evidence suggests the *Sermon* had a more overwhelming, positive impact on mixed communities, thus qualifying the text as a dramatic example of red ink. To recall Lopenzina, red ink implies "not only the written literary output of Native American in the colonial period, but the great difficulties of accessing a literature so over-inscribed by colonial norms and expectations—a literature that has been compulsively 'corrected' with the red ink of the colonial educator" (xi). The colonists' red ink inscribed the broadside version of Occom's *Sermon*, reducing it to a singular, sexualized lecture on savagery and drunkenness. This "correction" of Occom's message is perhaps the most explicit example of the public's fetishization of

Indianness in the wake of the execution and sermon event. But there were also positive reactions to Occom's *Sermon* among whites and Natives throughout New England. These reactions qualified the Native critical discourse of the *Sermon* as another form of red ink: these positive reactions give credence to Occom's red ink, a discourse that, in Lopenzina's words, negotiates "a crucial set of tools and circumstances upon which survival and cultural continuance hinges" (xi).

A few months after Paul's execution, Occom addresses his increased popularity. In a letter to colleague Rev. John Moorhead, Occom writes: "I have Continual Calls to Preach, both by the English and Indians, and I Preach 4 or 5 Times every week" (104).<sup>56</sup> White preachers Benjamin Bellknap and Joseph Borden wrote Occom from Rhode Island, noting the wide influence of his *Sermon*, and requested he lend his services to their community: "We are Destitute of a preacher of the Gospel in the meeting house...and we having had the favour of reading your Sermon on the Execution of Moses Paul, has greatly convinced us of the necessity of the Gospel be preached among us, and we earnestly Desire you" (Brooks, "This Indian World" 23).

Responses from Native communities were just as fervent. Occom's future son-in-law and fellow Mohegan preacher and spiritual leader, Joseph Johnson, recorded in his journal that he found great success in reading Occom's *Sermon* at gatherings at Farmington, Connecticut (23). Moreover, Johnson notes elsewhere in his journal that while visiting the Mohawk, he was called "some out of my way" to "read unto these Indians," "young and old," the *Sermon*" (Murray 187). In all, "Occom's *Sermon* went through nineteen editions," writes Brooks, "ranking Occom as the sixth leading author in



the American colonies during the 1770s” (23). The influence of Occom’s *Sermon* among mixed religious communities far outweighed the prejudicial mockeries published after the execution. The *Sermon*’s publication history and evidence of readers’ responses suggest, then, that Occom’s *Sermon* was a significant shaper and consolidator of community during the 1770s. And perhaps one explanation for the *Sermon*’s popularity was its historical popularity in New England culture.

### **The Adaptable New England Execution Sermon**

By adapting the execution sermon as a discourse on Native cultural solidarity, Occom infiltrated one of the most revered literary genres in the American colonies. As Occom’s correspondence illustrates, religious congregations were excited to hear him preach, to see him deliver similar types of emotionally-charged sermons. If we read Occom’s *Sermon* as an intertribal critical discourse, an assertion in red ink of Native community health and psychological sustainability, we must consider the politically charged symbolism of a Native writer adapting the execution sermon to assert his message.

Since 1674 the execution sermon was a long-standing genre that guided and secured political and religious dominance in New England.<sup>57</sup> Perry Miller famously contends that during the seventeenth century, the New England Puritan sermon ascribed to “the structure of [the] jeremiad,” which “was prescribed by the theory of external covenant.” This covenant “addressed mankind not as beings of a complicated psychology, but as creatures governed by a simple calculus...they are pertinaciously pursued for their sins” and must live their lives in repentance. A lay Puritan’s atonement

included a strict religious lifestyle as well as an austere reverence for clergy. The minister's job was to obtain strict obedience in his listeners, drawing out "provocations to [God's] vengeance," and instill a fear of judgment "unless his listeners acted upon his recommendations" (*New England Mind* 29). Miller reminds us elsewhere that New England colonial theocracy "was decidedly 'regimented'" and "legislated over any or all aspects of human behavior." In short, New England Puritans lived under "a dictatorship...of the holy and regenerate" (*Errand* 143). The printed Puritan sermon was, therefore, a reminder, an edict designed to prompt and maintain the structures of power and obedience promoted by colonial religious authorities.

In the seventeenth century, the Puritan sermon was tailored for many different occasions, but the execution sermon is unique to early America and served as an effective means for making social commentary. Ronald A. Bosco writes that there were "funeral sermons, lecture day sermons, election days sermons, and sermons for days of fast, humiliation, or thanksgiving." However, "the execution sermon was developed in form and style during the earliest days of New England's settlement" so as to "expand on the individual's opportunities to recognize the presence of grace and to direct him away from compromising behavior" (158-59). While ministers in England addressed the condemned prior to execution, their lectures tended to be simple, direct, and almost never take the form of a formal sermon, let alone be published. New England Puritans, however, established a unique system where clergy preached to the condemned in church prior the execution and, once at the gallows, delivered another formal sermon more heavily

invested with social criticism. Thus, the genre of the execution sermon seems to find its genesis in colonial New England (Bosco 159).<sup>58</sup>

The jeremiad remained a prominent rhetorical convention with execution sermons, as with other sermonic forms, up until the first decade of the eighteenth century, when the dominance of Puritanism had dissolved throughout New England (Stout 118). By the 1730s, though, jeremiadic conventions had subsided and in their wake, sermons began to focus on “individual wickedness rather than communal guilt” (Cohen *Pillars* 49). The dominant theology of the First Great Awakening, New Light Calvinism, was more concerned with individual conversion, a new birth in Christ, and repentance than the theocratic-minded concerns of the jeremiad. Therefore, during the 1730s and 40s, the height of the Great Awakening, execution sermons centered on personal conversion with the intent of influencing attendees to reflect on their own lives and seek out a new birth in Christ. By the late 1720s, a subgenre of the execution sermon emerged as a way of selling first-person accounts of gallows conversions. This genre found its genesis in Native disparity.

The execution of Joseph Quasson (Wampanoag) and Patience Boston (Nauset) during the 1720s and 30s established the formation of the crime narrative in general, and the Native crime narrative specifically, thus carving out a niche in the execution sermon genre for white-mediated Native confessionals. The *Summary Account of the Life and Death of Joseph Quasson, Indian* was related by white evangelical Samuel Moody. Quasson, who was serving in the military in Maine, was convicted of murdering a fellow soldier. Moody used the event to seek out an independent printing of the narrative.

Moody's success in having Quasson's *Account* published established it as the first printing of a singular execution conversion narrative. Prior to Quasson's *Account*, autobiographical sketches of the condemned were appended to sermons (Cohen *Pillars* 71-72). This tradition did not cease with Quasson, however: Moses Paul's biography is appended to Occom's *Sermon*.

Quasson's *Account* is notable, however, because it traces, in the first person, a Native man's early conversion, drunken fall from grace, and desperate reclaiming of salvation as he awaits the gallows. The *Account* uses the trope of the drunken Indian as a way of illustrating the might of colonial justice and a model for Christian conversion on the margins of colonial society. Moody clearly saw pedagogical value in "enacting the death of a Christian penitent" (Cohen 71). Following Quasson's death, Moody sought out Boston bookseller Samuel Gerrish, who was "aggressively marketing works of popular piety and adventure" (71). As Gerrish's publishing interests suggest, Moody thought it lucrative to print a first-person narrative detailing a Native man's propensity for "Wickedness" and behavior "without Reflection" to an audience craving didactic tales of adventure.<sup>59</sup>

Moody's investment in Native execution narratives only grew, and in 1736, he had another text to market. In 1736, a Native servant girl, Patience Boston, was executed for the murder of her master's son. Unlike Quasson's *Account*, Moody's *A Faithful Narrative of the Wicked Life and Remarkable Conversion of Patience Boston* is a layered history of mischief, malicious intentions, and tragedy. Boston's predisposition to "Strong and violent Corruptions" is compounded when she is "drawn in to the Love of strong

Drink, by some Indians.”<sup>60</sup> Thereafter, alcohol is a catalyst for an increase in violent behavior and eventually murder. We should also note that her introduction to alcohol comes through anonymous Native contact. Her narrative, then, suggests an inner- or inter-tribal perpetuity of alcoholic corruption. Furthermore, what modern readers would describe as her addiction, is reiterated throughout the account; indeed, at one point, she relates: “[I was] drowning all good Tho’ts, Desires, Purposes and Beginnings of Reformation, in strong Drink; growing worse than ever before.” Like Quasson, her conversion comes after she is convicted of murder. The latter half of the *Narrative* is densely packed with scripture articulating themes of damnation and repentance, rhetorically grooming Boston as a natural biblical scholar. Boston’s execution was widely attended, but apparently not memorable enough to sell copies of her account. The lack of interest in a print copy of Boston’s confession led to a stall in printings.<sup>61</sup> In early 1738, however, New Englanders were captivated by Jonathan Edwards’s *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls* (1737). Edwards’s report of seemingly miraculous religious conversions in Northampton, Massachusetts, captured the attention of believers and skeptics alike. His *Faithful Narrative* touched off the colonial Great Awakening, which lasted well into the 1740s. In May 1738, Samuel and Joseph Moody’s collaborative account of Boston Patience’s conversion was aptly titled *A Faithful Narrative* and sold to an eager public. The similarity in title to Edwards’s popular tract was not coincidental. In fact, as Daniel Cohen suggests, the Moodys’ choice of title “suggests that the conversion and

memorialization of Patience Boston was part of a much broader evangelical current that was gaining force in New England during the 1730s” (76).<sup>62</sup>

The criminal conversion narratives published during the first half of the eighteenth century denote a temporary turn in readers’ interest from strictly sermonic texts to candid recollections of sinfulness and the desire for salvation at the end of one’s life. As noted above, the circulation and even titling of these narratives were entirely dependent on a shifting cultural landscape. In the late 1720s, New England readers were fascinated with moralized tales of adventure. By the late 1730s, the religious revivals of the Great Awakening created a demand for a text more overtly connected to the rhetoric of popular revivalist tracts. But by the end of the Great Awakening, roughly around 1745, the execution sermon moved back into prominence with readers. The colonial construction of Indianness in the public sphere, however, continued uninterrupted. Native subjects remained handy examples of social denigration.

The common bond between colonial crime narratives and execution sermons was the reinforcement of social norms, and the Native subject provided a convenient and economically viable template for demonstrating the evils of vice and the necessity for marginalized peoples’ subordination. While the Native subjects of these crime narratives were posed as belated but diligent converts, they were also anecdotal examples of colonial power. Evangelicalism was a mighty tool for colonial governments’ seizure of Native lands; moreover, sermons played an important part in highlighting the apparent spiritual and cultural inadequacies of Natives people.

The Mohegan-Mason land dispute was further complicated by the fracturing effects of colonial evangelicalism. Following the controversial election of sachem Ben Uncas II, Uncas II “embraced the English presence” on Mohegan lands. As a sign of support, Uncas II and his wife attended sermons preached by ministers invited by John Mason (Fisher 59). Not surprisingly, following his attendance at these sermons, Uncas II stopped participating in “certain traditional [Mohegan] practices” (Fisher 61). One of Uncas II’s primary strategies for securing the Connecticut General Assembly’s support was publicly condemning Mohegan ceremonial dances, calling them “drunken four-day ‘Frolicks.’” In return, the General Assembly sent Uncas II and his wife “a coat and hat, along with a lovely new English –style gown” for his wife (Fisher 60-61). The literal colonial re-dressing of Uncas II and his wife is an apt symbol of benign colonial reciprocity for Native subservience. Uncas II’s subordinate relationship with the Connecticut General Assembly and the subsequent fracturing of Mohegan peoples along ideological lines is a specific demonstration of colonial evangelical power.<sup>63</sup>

The Connecticut General Assembly was always motivated by land seizure. The evangelizing of Mohegan sachem Uncas II and, eventually, Uncas III instilled a sense of cultural insecurity in the tribal leadership in order to ease Native resistance to settler encroachment. For both sachems, Mohegan religious ceremonies and, consequently, the sacredness of land tenure were devalued. The general sermon undoubtedly played a part in the psychological warfare wielded by colonial authorities. The execution sermon, its appended confessionals, and the more general evangelist sermons contained overlapping narratives pertinent to notions of Indian depravity. As Harry Stout argues, “[w]hen

regular sermons, whether in print or manuscript, are examined alongside printed occasional sermons [such as the execution sermon], they confirm the enduring power of the sermon to mold corporate values and personal piety” (104). Although we do not know the exact nature of the sermon Uncas II heard/read, his subsequent denial of Mohegan religiosity is evidence of a turn in religious conviction. Colonial sermons posited common themes of temperance, the evils of non-Christian religious worship, and the necessity for dutiful relationships with Anglo authority.<sup>64</sup> Thus, evangelicalism helped manipulate Native leaders for colonial economic and territorial gain, and the sermon played a specific role in transmitting and sustaining the rhetoric of colonial power to its listeners and readers.

If the execution sermon, specifically, “embodied the traditional ideals of ideological unity and [colonial] communal cohesiveness,” as Daniel Cohen asserts, then we must recognize its larger role in the formation of a British American imagined community (30). Benedict Anderson argues that the formation of national consciousness derives from print cultures that “created fields of exchange and communication” on a scale only achievable through highly circulated texts such as newspapers and periodicals. The ability to “compre[hend] one another via print and paper,” writes Anderson, created a culture where “fellow readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed...the embryo of a nationally imagined community” (44). As I discuss in chapter one, the transatlantic evangelical print networks of the 1730s and 40s tied geographically disparate religious communities together into an imagined community through the circulation of letters, periodicals such as Thomas Prince Jr.’s *Christian History*, and



essays such as Jonathan Edwards's *Faithful Narrative*. The execution sermon, too, is most certainly part of this discursive litany of texts.

Unlike letters, tracts, and essays, though, the genre of the execution sermon is specifically located in a tradition of societal maintenance. The mores of crime and punishment via colonial capital execution compound the sermon's overt religiosity; that is, the theology of the sermon is an affective vehicle for transmitting colonial authority. Therefore, as my discussion of Native execution narratives and Uncas II's rejection of Mohegan culture suggests, the sermon, in its occasional and regular form, is a textual agent of early British American nationalism. To recall Cohen, "[p]ublished discourses [sermons] not only reached a wider [audience]," "they were believed to leave a more lasting impression" (3).<sup>65</sup> The early British American nationalist narrative, then, speaks for itself: Native traditions, kinship bonds, and religious values are as empty as the lands they inhabit.

Occom's letters and the preface to his *Sermon* indicate that he was fully aware of the power of print in facilitating an intertribal understanding of mutual spiritual and civil objectives.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Occom elicits a particular understanding of the existence and importance of a discursive print culture: Occom uses the word "world" five times in the *Sermon*'s brief preface. Occom's use of the term is more than a generic allusion to the colonial public sphere, and Occom's extant writings contextualize this point. For example, in a letter to colleague Andrew Gifford, dated October 19, 1772, Occom expresses a desire for Benjamin Keach's *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors* (1682). Observing his ministerial colleague, Montaukett preacher Jacob Follower's

ministerial efforts among the Pequot, Occom notes “that is the best Book for the Instruction of the Indians of Humane Composure I ever Saw” (Brooks 101).

Following the March 13, 1772, intertribal meeting at Mohegan, where several New England tribes convened to discuss resettlement to Oneida territory in New York, Occom expressed a more specific enthusiasm for securing select texts. In November 1773, Occom wrote to the Officers of the English Trust for Moor’s Indian Charity School. Rather than pine for a copy of Keach’s book, as he did in his letter to Gifford, Occom directly requests copies of the text along with Bibles and other supplies. Occom sees Keach’s *Tropologia* as a necessary ideological companion to the growing interest of resettlement in Brotherton, NY. Occom writes: “[we] are most needful [of these] Books,” because “there is a motion among the tribes of Indians round about here, to unite together and Seek of a New Settlement.” “Their view,” Occom observes, is to “embody together both in Civil and Religious State,” and these texts are essential in preparing hopefuls “to Introduce the Religion of Jesus Christ by their example” (Brooks 108).<sup>67</sup>

Occom’s weaving together of ecclesiastical and civil goals via the influence of print suggests an acute understanding of cultural formation through the written word. By 1773, talk of Brotherton added further necessity to formulating common objectives for a successful Native-led Christianized resettlement.<sup>68</sup> Occom’s 1772 *Sermon*, however, foregrounds the above letters, and his use of the execution sermon powerfully endorses intertribal solidarity by adapting a genre that promotes civil mores with ecclesiastical discourse.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Unless noted otherwise, the citation of all of Occom's writings comes from Joanna Brooks, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom*. Ed. Joanna Brooks. New York: Oxford UP, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Unless noted otherwise, all citations from Brooks pertaining to Occom come from her editorial analyses in *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan*.

<sup>3</sup> While Occom's *Sermon* certainly garnered a lot of attention at the time of its publication, a fact I will address later in this chapter, it was not the first publication by a Native writer. Mohegan preacher Joseph Johnson's open letter to Moses Paul, the same recipient of Occom's *Sermon*, was published as a pamphlet in New-London, Connecticut, in March 1772, thus predating Occom's *Sermon* by eight months.

<sup>4</sup> See Joanna Brooks, *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan*. Ed. Joanna Brooks. New York: Oxford UP, 2006 and *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African-American and Native American Literatures*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003; Drew Lopezina, *Red Ink: Native Americans Picking Up the Pen in the Colonial Period*. Albany: SUNY P, 2012; Phillip H. Round, *Removable Type: Histories of the Book in Indian Country, 1663-1880*. Chapel Hill: The U of North Carolina P, 2010; Bernd C. Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1997; Ronald A. Bosco, "Lectures at the Pillory: The Early American Execution Sermon." *American Quarterly* 30.2 (1978): 156-76; Ava Chamberlain, "The Execution of Moses Paul: A Story of Crime and Contact in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut." *The New England Quarterly* 77.3 (2004): 414-450;

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Michael Elliott, "'This Indian Bait': Samson Occom and the Voice of Liminality." *Early American Literature* 29.3 (1994): 233-53; and Matt Salyer, "'Between the Heavens and the Earth': Narrating the Execution of Moses Paul." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 36.4 (2012): 77-105.

<sup>5</sup> For more on Johnson, see Laura Murray, *To Do Good To My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751-1776*. Ed. Laura Murray. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Chamberlain, 414-50.

<sup>7</sup> For more on these threads of intertribal discourse, see Chamberlain 414-50.

<sup>8</sup> Roppolo, "Samson Occom as Writing Instructor: The Search for and Intertribal Rhetoric." *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Eds. Craig S. Womack, Daniel Heath Justice and Christopher B. Teuton. Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 2008. 303-24.

<sup>9</sup> Occom, *Sermon* 177

<sup>10</sup> According to W. DeLoss Love, Occom's *Sermon* went through at least nineteen editions, was republished in London, and was translated in Welsh, republished in Caernarson, Wales. See Love, *Samson Occom and the Christian Indians of New England*. 1899. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2000. 174.

<sup>11</sup> Murray, 171.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> For more on the specific circumstances affecting each tribe leading up to the 1773 resettlement meeting, see Murray, 168-74.

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<sup>14</sup> Occom, “Mohegan Tribe to Sir William Johnson” (1764) and “Mohegan Tribe against Robert Clelland” (April 26, 1764); Brooks, *Collected Writings* 144-45.

<sup>15</sup> Occom, *Journal I*, December 6, 1743-November 29, 1748 (Brooks 249).

<sup>16</sup> Daniel A. Cohen observes that execution sermons were “almost as well-attended as the actual hangings.” Cohen notes that one eyewitness from the late seventeenth century reported that the site of the sermon had to moved “for fear that the gallery of an old church would collapse under the weight of the thousands reportedly jammed into the building” (3).

<sup>17</sup> Hangings and execution sermons would have been attended by people of upper and lower classes, including blacks and Native peoples. Occom’s preface to his *Sermon* details the need for “plain, every-day talk” so his message may be “serviceable” to the “poor Negroes” and his “poor kindred the Indians” (177). Occom’s concern for clarity would not have been restricted to his oral performance, however. Execution sermons were one of the most affordable texts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Scott D. Seay writes that printed “execution sermons in simple pamphlet form would have been available at a fraction of a day’s wage for a common laborer” (27). Regarding the sermon’s readership, Daniel A. Cohen concludes that “gallows discourses addressed the community as a whole,” “ranging from the bottom to the top of the social hierarchy” (5).

<sup>18</sup> Also see Amy Den Ouden, *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in New England*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. 1-37 and 91-141.

<sup>19</sup> Brooks, “This Indian World” 14.

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<sup>20</sup> For more on the Great Awakening in New England Indian territory, see Linford D.

Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening*. New York: Oxford UP, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the radicalism of James Davenport, see Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening."* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999. 14, 89, 191, 242-43, 246, and 253.

<sup>22</sup> Murray, xv, 50-54.

<sup>23</sup> Brooks, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., xxi-xxii.

<sup>25</sup> In a 1756 letter to an unknown recipient, Wheelock discusses Ocom as a model for Indian re-culturation: "And I was not a little Encouraged in this Affair by the Success of the Endeavors I us'd...in ye education of Samson Ocom who has been usefull...beyond what could have been Reasonably expected of an English man & with less than half of the Expense"

([http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/Library\\_Bulletin/Nov1999/Hoefnagel\\_Close.html#fntxt35\\_](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/Library_Bulletin/Nov1999/Hoefnagel_Close.html#fntxt35_))

<sup>26</sup> Eleazar Wheelock to George Whitefield, March 1, 1756.

<sup>27</sup> Wheelock, *A Plain and Faithful Narrative of the Original Design, Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Indian Charity-School at Lebanon, in Connecticut*. 36

<sup>28</sup> Murray, 52-53.

<sup>29</sup> For more on Native enrollment at the Moor's school as well as detailed study of Native education in the colonies in the late eighteenth century, see Margaret Connell Szasz, *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> To Eleazar Wheelock, July 24, 1771; Brooks, 98-99.

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<sup>31</sup> In the same letter to Wheelock, Oocom writes: “I was quite Willing to become a Gazing Stock, Yea Even a Laughing Stock, in Strange Countries to Promote your Cause—We Loudly Proclaimed before Multitudes of People from Place to Place, that there was a most glorious Prospect of Spreading the gospel of the Lord Jesus to the furthest Save Nations in the Wilderness, thro your Institution” (99).

<sup>32</sup> In a discussion of Wheelock’s *Continuation of the Narrative of the Indian Charity School* (1771), Brooks notes that Wheelock made his position clear regarding the dismissal of Native peoples’ well-being. Brooks writes: “the ‘bad conduct’ of his Native American alumni had given him ‘the greatest weight of sorrow’ and led him to believe that white students were better candidates for the ministry” (Brooks 98 n.68; Wheelock 19).

<sup>33</sup> *New London Gazette*, December 20, 1771.

<sup>34</sup> *New London Gazette*, September 11, 1772.

<sup>35</sup> See Oocom’s address to the white clergy, *Sermon* 191.

<sup>36</sup> Oocom’s worldly sense of the stigma brought on Natives by alcohol was learned firsthand. In a 1769 letter to the Long Island Presbytery, he admits to “have been Shamefully taken over with Strong Drink,” which he writes, “Blemished the Pure Religion of Jesus Christ, and Blacken my own Character & function, and Hurt my own Soul” (87).

<sup>37</sup> For a digitized copy of the broadside, see the Native American History Resources page on the American Antiquarian website.

<http://www.americanantiquarian.org/nativeamerican.htm>

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<sup>38</sup> Occom had preached among the Oneida in 1761 and 1763, and in 1768, hosted a delegation from the Oneida tribe. Following Occom's return from England, he sought to renew his ties to Southern New England tribes as well as rekindle a relationship with the Oneida (Brooks xxii-xxiii).

<sup>39</sup> To Andrew Gifford, October 19, 1772 (Brooks 101-02).

<sup>40</sup> According to Brooks, prior to Occom leaving for England, "Andrew Oliver, then Secretary of the Boston Board of Commissioners of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (SPG), wrote a letter to Jasper Mauduit, head of the London Society, accusing Wheelock and Occom of failing to credit the SPG for its supporting role in Occom's education and of misrepresenting Occom's conversion and early career." In short, Oliver's letter accused Occom as being a fraud and Wheelock as being the orchestrator of Occom's pious persona. Oliver argued, incorrectly, that Occom, "a mohawk," was "very lately bro't out of gross paganism & in very little time fitted by M. Wheelock to be what he is." Brooks notes that "[t]he circulation of the letter became a source of ongoing difficulty" for Occom, and ultimately marked his trip abroad and back in the colonies with shadows of suspicion (265). See Occom's pre-voyage letter to Wheelock, December 6, 1765, for an expressed concern over the SPG's criticism (Brooks 74).

<sup>41</sup> For a succinct history of Mohegan sachem and land disputes, see Amy E. Den Ouden, *Beyond Conquest: Native Peoples and the Struggle for History in England*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. For Occom's role as constituted tribal council representative, see Love 119-29.



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<sup>42</sup> Brooks, xxi.

<sup>43</sup> For more on the complexity of Mason-Mohegan case, inner-Mohegan factions, and Occom's growing contention for appointed white missionaries to Mohegan, see Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind*, 72-80 and Love, 119-29.

<sup>44</sup> Occom's vocal, proactive support of the Mason resolutions which rejected Ben Uncas III's land sales landed him in serious trouble with the New England clergy. In addition to criticizing Uncas III, Occom also publicly chastised white Mohegan missionary David Jewett for being an incompetent teacher, favoring white students, and showing no support for Mohegan interests. Jewett supported Uncas III and attempted to have Occom formally disciplined for his "prideful" ways. After some negotiations with Wheelock, Occom agreed to write a formal apology for his "imprudent, rash, and Offensive conduct" (Peyer 73-74). The sincerity of Occom's apology leaves little to question.

<sup>45</sup> For the complete text of Johnson's letter, see Murray 177-80.

<sup>46</sup> Round contextualizes his understanding of "Indian Publics" based on Michael Warner and Jurgen Habermas' well-known theories of the public sphere. See Warner, *The Letters of the Republic* and Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*.

<sup>47</sup> See Jean O'Brien, "'Our Old and Valluable Liberty': A Nantick Indian Petition in Defense of their Fishing Rights, 1748." *Early Native Literacies in New England: A Documentary and Critical Anthology*. Ed. Kristina Bross and Hillary E. Wyss. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2008.119-30.

<sup>48</sup> Occom, *Sermon* 177.

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<sup>49</sup> Wayne Minnick, "The New England Execution Sermon, 1639-1800." 80-81.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 82-83.

<sup>52</sup> Brooks, "This Indian World" 20-21.

<sup>53</sup> To Eleazar Wheelock, July 24, 1771. Brooks, 98-100.

<sup>54</sup> Lopenzina, xi.

<sup>55</sup> For more on the complexities of Native/Colonial relations during the organizing of the Brotherton and Stockbridge movements, see Lopenzina 300-22.

<sup>56</sup> Occom, To Rev. John Moorhead. April 10, 1773. Brooks, 104-05.

<sup>57</sup> Bosco, 157-58.

<sup>58</sup> The history of the execution sermon is fascinating but vast, and beyond the scope of this project. For a detailed history of the execution sermon, see Bosco, "Lectures at the Pillory: The Early Execution Sermon"; Wayne C. Minnick, "The New England Execution Sermon, 1639-1800." *Speech Monographs* 35.1 (1968): 77-89; Daniel A. Cohen, *Pillars of Salt, Monuments of Grace: New England Crime Literature and the Origins of American Popular Culture, 1674-1860*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993; and Scott D. Sway, *Hanging Between Heaven and Earth: Capital Crime, Execution Preaching, and Theology in Early New England*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois UP, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Moody, *Account*. Retrieved from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma05/peltier/conversion/quasson.html>

<sup>60</sup> Moody, *A Faithful Narrative*. Retrieved from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma05/peltier/conversion/boston.html>

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<sup>61</sup> For more on the sales history of the *Narrative*, see Cohen 75-76.

<sup>62</sup> In regards to minority execution conversion narratives, Cohen makes an important point: These conversion narratives “privileged the spiritual insights and subjective experiences” of those living on the margins of colonial society. The accounts of the poor, women, blacks, Natives, and even pirates demonstrated that “if even such pariahs could achieve a glorious salvation in the shadow of the gallows, surely the humdrum readers of their narratives could aspire to heaven as well” (79).

<sup>63</sup> The Mohegan-Mason land dispute was not merely a Mohegan concern. Linford Fisher observes: “Every major Native group in the region was represented” at a 1738 hearing. Among those in attendance were representatives for “the Mohegans, Niantics, and Pequots, with the Narragansetts also likely in attendance [...] A victory for the Mohegans would have increased the possibility of other Native groups pursuing similar suits” (62).

<sup>64</sup> A popular contemporaneous execution sermon, Eliphalet Adams’s *A Sermon Preached on the Occasion of the Execution of Katherine Garret, an Indian-Servant* (1738), was most notable for Garret’s confessional appended to the back of the *Sermon*. Garret (Pequot), convicted of infanticide, warns her fellow servants to “be Obedient to your Masters & Mistresses. Be Faithful in your places and diligent: Above all Fear God; fear to Sin against Him: He is our Great Master” (Bross and Wyss, *Literacies* 142-43). Garret’s narrative illustrates the rhetoric of due diligence common in EuroAmerican evangelical discourse. As I discuss in chapter one, evangelist Anne Dutton’s *Letter to the Negros Lately Converted* (1743) underscores the importance of slaves embracing their divinely-sanctioned station in life. To do otherwise is to go against God and therefore

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forfeit any chance of eternal salvation. In addition to Garret's warnings, she also notes her various social transgressions, such as "Pride & Lying" (142). Garret's confessional is, then, an example of recapitulated colonial ideology. Its relational power to readers lies in the guise of a Native woman's voice facing the ultimate penance for transgressing colonial religious norms.

<sup>65</sup> To support this theory, Cohen cites Cotton Mather, which I think pertinent to include here: "Sermons Preached, are like Showres of Rain that Water for the Instant...But Sermons printed, are like Snow that lies longer on the Earth" (3).

<sup>66</sup> Occom, *Sermon* 177.

<sup>67</sup> "To The Officers of the English Trust for Moor's Indian Charity School, November 10, 1773." Brooks, 107-09.

<sup>68</sup> For more on Occom's understanding of written text, see Round, *Removable Type* 67-72.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The genesis of this dissertation grew from a question that engaged my reading of early black and Native writers: why do these writers, who come from different backgrounds with dissimilar motivations for documenting their lives, share the need to discuss Anglo-American evangelicalism in their writings? The seemingly ubiquitous presence of well-known transatlantic preacher George Whitefield in black writings, for example, was the first specific entry into this project. I observed that Whitefield's presence in works by James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, John Marrant, and Olaudah Equiano is reminiscent of Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s discussion of early black narrative revision in *The Signifying Monkey* (1988). These writers included Whitefield as one of several recurring tropes in their narratives.<sup>1</sup> The scope of this project goes beyond Whitefield, however. While Whitefield was a major figure in the First Great Awakening during the 1740s and an influence well into the last decades of the eighteenth century, his presence has a more figurative value in this dissertation.

For some black writers, Whitefield was emblematic of the spiritual egalitarianism of the Awakening's New Birth theology. As I discuss in chapter two, for example, John Marrant drew inspiration from Whitefield in his *Narrative*; Marrant credits Whitefield for his Christian conversion. But, most crucial to my project, Marrant was inspired by the Awakening's emphasis on equal access to the new birth regardless of race or class. In his

*Journal*, Marrant adapts the form of the missionary journal, a genre popularized by Whitefield and other clergy of the Awakening, as a means of asserting his authorial agency and legitimizing the religious passion of his black, white, and Mi'kmaq congregants in Nova Scotia.

Samson Occom, too, was inspired by the spiritual inclusivity of the Awakening. Like Marrant, Occom used another well-known genre of religious writing, the execution sermon, as an oral and printed declaration of Native spiritual and political sovereignty. Occom revised the traditional didacticism of the Anglo-American execution sermon genre with a message of Native-Christian obedience and self-reliance. For Occom, the spiritual egalitarianism in New Light theology provided a means for challenging colonial religious authority as well as more generalized prejudicial views of Native peoples.

Examining these writers' engagement with Awakening principles asks early American literary and religious scholars to read the historical Great Awakening and the New Light stir as a cultural movement not bound to Eurocentric values. As I assert in my introduction and elsewhere in this dissertation, scholars have tended to understand the Awakening as a white, Anglo-American religious phenomenon that included blacks and Native peoples. Instead, as I argue throughout this project, the Awakening not only appealed to but was shaped by black and Native writers.

Bryan's slaves, Marrant, and Occom used the behavioral and literary norms of the Awakening and refashioned them for their own purposes. The slaves asserted themselves in public as viable evangelicals. They sang, danced, and worshipped aloud, thus disobeying the Slave Code of 1740. Their actions led to the composition of Dutton's

letter, a text which overtly positioned them as readers and participants in the transatlantic evangelical print network. Marrant and Oocom adapted in unique ways prominent literary genres of the Awakening as a means of declaring their personal agency as racialized subjects and as a testament to the vitality and spiritual legitimacy of their respective communities. By reading these writers as shapers of an alternative Awakening discourse, we see the Great Awakening and New Light stir as just as much a product of black and Native writing as Anglo-American. As a result, we have black and Native-authored texts that argue for spiritual equality and communal solidarity in the face of colonial and early American racism. Placing these writers in the same conversation as more well-known evangelicals such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield shifts scholarly interpretations of the Great Awakening. We may now move away from notions that the movement was a brief Anglo-American event that just happened to include blacks and Native peoples.

While my study focuses on Jonathan Bryan's slaves, Marrant, and Oocom, other writers such as Phillis Wheatley and Joseph Johnson (Mohegan) raise intriguing questions about how black and Native writers continued to shape and influence post-Awakening evangelical discourse. For example, how might colonists' mixed reception of Wheatley's most famous elegy "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield" (1770) be indicative of resistance met by black female writers who were inspired by and publicly interpreted the values of the Awakening? In one notable case, Bostonian Jane Dunlap's *Poems upon Several Sermons* (1771) contained meditative poems on several of Whitefield's sermons. In the first entry of the pamphlet, Dunlap addresses Wheatley as a

raced and, ironically, gendered competitor: “Shall his due praises be so loudly sung / By a young Afric damsels virgin tongue / And I be silent and no mention make.”<sup>2</sup> Dunlap’s concern for Wheatley’s “loudly sung” praise of Whitefield opens up a rich critical discussion about colonists’ perceptions of black female participation in post-Awakening discourse.

Extant scholarship on Wheatley opens up a need for an Awakening-based study of her poetry. Vincent Carretta’s *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* offers rich context for Wheatley’s association with post-Awakening culture, but offers little analysis of her participation as a black female in nonwhite evangelical discourse.<sup>3</sup> John C. Fields’s and Eric D. Lamoire’s edited collection *New Essay on Phillis Wheatley* contains a variety of productive contributions on Wheatley and her work, but does not offer a singular focus on Wheatley and the Awakening. Furthermore, John C. Shields’s *Phillis Wheatley’s Poetics of Liberation* comments extensively about Wheatley’s Christian influences, but neglects to explore in any detail Wheatley’s position as an authorial participant in the New Light stir.<sup>4</sup>

A study of Joseph Johnson’s writings as participating in Awakening discourse expands current Native scholarship that tends to focus exclusively on Occom. Johnson’s “Letter from J\_\_\_h J\_\_\_n, one of the Mohegan Tribe of Indians, to his Countryman, Moses Paul” (1772) asserts a New Light-inspired thesis that argues the need for a new birth in Christ (142).<sup>5</sup> Johnson’s “Letter” predates Occom’s *Sermon* and prefaces many of Occom’s arguments. However, when discussed in the greater context of Awakening discourse, Johnson’s “Letter” demonstrates an emergent author who couches the call for



spiritual salvation in socially collective terms; that is, he promotes a Native-Christian solidarity by frequently using the collective pronoun “we” throughout the letter. Furthermore, Johnson uses Isaiah 1:18 as an ambiguously raced reference to God’s universal love: “Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (144). Here, Johnson selects a passage that emphasizes the inherent evil of redness and the purity of whiteness. Rather than ascribe to the racialized language of the passage, Johnson presents Isaiah’s metaphors as evidence of Native struggles against Anglo-American Christianity. Johnson’s “Letter” and subsequent “Sermon to the Oneida” (1774) reveal an author who employed and adopted the ideas of the Awakening as a means of promoting Native Christian spirituality.

Unlike Wheatley, there is little scholarship on Johnson, so early American and Native studies would greatly benefit from a study of Johnson’s post-Awakening discourse. Laura J. Murray’s *To Do Good to My Brethren* collects all of Johnson’s writings and contributes valuable historical context and critical insight. Murray includes a brief section on Johnson and religion, but does not read his writings in the context of Awakening discourse.<sup>6</sup> In *Removable Type*, Phillip Round reads Johnson’s literary contributions, like Ocum’s, as part of a dynamic and often vexed network of “institutional duty and self-revelation” (65). Situating Johnson as a shaper of Awakening discourse would greatly broaden a singular study on how and why the Great Awakening and New Light Stir appealed to writers of color and how they in turn shaped the movements.

Understanding these writers' relationship to eighteenth-century evangelical culture expands our understanding of nineteenth-century Native and black writers. For example, in "An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man" (1833), William Apess (Pequot) contends that God is "the maker and preserver of both the white man and the Indian, whose abilities are the same and who are to be judged by one God, who will show no favor to outward appearances but will judge righteousness" (95). Apess's life as an itinerate preacher and outspoken critic of American political and ecclesiastical racism is an extension of O'Connell's and Johnson's evangelical discourse. A study of Apess's writings would benefit from being positioned as part of a literary tradition steeped in Native evangelical discourse, and indicates a greater need for examining Awakening ideas as an evolving means of arguing for Native rights.

We may also recognize Frederick Douglass's critique of southern American Christianity as being an extension of both Native and black evangelical writing. Like Marrant, O'Connell, and Apess before him, Douglass recognizes a distinction between white Christianity and Christ's universal love. In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), Douglass argues that "between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked" (75). Douglass's explicit critique of white American Christian hypocrisy finds a root in earlier writers' adaptation of Awakening ideas. Understanding eighteenth-century black and Native writers' formation of evangelical discourse ultimately prepares new ways of interpretation nineteenth-century writers.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Gates Jr., 127-32.

<sup>2</sup> John C. Shields, 6; Shields, *Phillis Wheatley's Poetics of Liberation: Backgrounds and Contexts*. Knoxville: The U of Tennessee P, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Carretta, 25-44.

<sup>4</sup> Shields, 125-48.

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, "Joseph Johnson to Moses Paul, March 29. 1772." *To Do Good To My Indian Brethren: The Writings of Joseph Johnson, 1751-1776*. Ed. Laura J. Murray. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1998. 141-46.

<sup>6</sup> Murray, 40-45.

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